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EXECUTIVE BOARD

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 16 April 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. DIEGUEZ (Mexico)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

OPENING STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled the major positive changes that had occurred in the past year on the global political scene, as a result of the events in Eastern Europe, the easing of some regional conflicts, the independence of Namibia, and the apparent start of change in South Africa. No similar trend was discernible, however, in economic and social development, since the gap between North and South had widened, the poisoning of the environment threatened the future of the entire planet, and racial conflicts were resurgent in many parts of the world. The adjustment policies of the indebted countries and the continued maintenance of the military apparatus had caused living standards to decline and had restricted access to health services and education, thus affecting the most vulnerable groups, especially children and mothers.

2. Since the previous session of the Executive Board, the General Assembly had adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Governments, 79 of which had signed it and 3 had ratified it, had shown a great willingness to make the Convention the internal juridical framework for ensuring the development and protection of children everywhere. It would be most desirable if the 20 ratifications needed for its entry into force took place by the end of September, in time for the convening of the World Summit for Children proposed by various Heads of State, which would have the support of UNICEF acting as its secretariat. The Summit was a unique opportunity to place the whole range of children's issues on the global political agenda and to help make them an integral part of development plans.

3. During the last year, much progress had been made in the field of health: more than 40 per cent of countries had reached their immunization targets with an 85-per-cent coverage of children below the age of one for all antigens. Major advances had also been made in the control of diarrhoeal diseases and in oral rehydration therapy. AIDS, malaria and the sequelae of acute respiratory infections would continue to require the attention of the Executive Board. In connection with the greater emphasis to be given to basic education, the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien (Thailand) had very pertinently taken up the main obstacles to progress in that field of human development. Also, at the first meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)-UNICEF Joint Committee on Education, future areas of co-operation between the two organizations had been established.

4. In her travels, she had been able to observe the activities undertaken by the Government and the First Lady of Egypt to promote the interests of children. She had also become acquainted with the various programmes being carried out in Mozambique with UNICEF support and the efforts of that country's Government to integrate refugees into the productive process and rehabilitate the children affected by the war. If a peace process were to take hold as hoped, Mozambique's programme would have to be adjusted to that new reality. She had also visited

(The Chairman)

Bangladesh, a country that played an important role in the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation, at whose summit meeting 1990 had been declared the Year of Girls in order to mobilize the countries of the region to act in favour of girls and to promote their access to basic education and female literacy. Despite its economic difficulties, Bangladesh had been able to achieve a broad immunization coverage that would soon allow it to reach the 85-per-cent target. In El Salvador, she had attended a regional meeting on adolescent women, a subject to which UNICEF should give greater attention. In Cuba, she had attended a seminar on strategies for reducing maternal and child mortality, in Latin America and the Caribbean, which had used the Cocoyoc Declaration adopted in Mexico in 1988 as the basis for its work, and she had had an opportunity to learn of the impressive strides Cuba had made in health and education, making it one of the countries with the lowest maternal and child mortality rates.

5. The decade of the 1990s was opening with a great momentum in favour of children, and the Executive Board should take advantage of it to encourage changes in the economic and social structures that held the key to a better future for children under conditions of progress, freedom and justice.

6. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) observed that the changes highlighted by the Chairman were transforming the global scene and providing an opportunity that had to be seized in order to secure the position of children at the centre of the concern not only of parents and families, but of communities and nations. Since the last session, a number of the Board's hopes had become a reality: the General Assembly, in the culmination of a decade of hard work at all levels, had adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Child and the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Seventy-nine countries had signed the Convention and it was urgent for 20 countries to ratify it so that it could enter into force before the World Summit for Children to be held in September. The hope was that the Summit would signal the emergence of a new ethic of responsibility dictating how societies should act towards children, which would include their rights to primary health care and a primary education.

7. In March the World Conference on Education for All had been held in Jomtien (Thailand), and the report on it was contained in document E/ICEF/1990/L.14. At the Conference there had been strong commitment to universal primary education by the year 2000, a goal that had to include also adult literacy programmes and a wider use of the media as a third channel of learning. The new commitment to education that had resulted from that meeting was reflected in the proposed allocations for education in the coming years and the new partnership between the four main financing agencies: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.

8. One of the most important proposals before the Board, which was documented in the medium-term plan (E/ICEF/1990/3, para. 201), called for an increase in the percentage of UNICEF's programme funding for basic education from the 7 per cent in 1989 to 15 per cent by 1993, with a projected increase to 25 per cent by the

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year 2000. That could be achieved by keeping health expenditures constant in real terms while the overall budget increased, so that the 40 per cent currently allocated to health would represent only 25 per cent by the end of the decade. It was important to emphasize that investment in education, particularly for girls and women, was, in fact, investment in health and nutrition. Education was also the key in areas such as the environment, family size, and safe motherhood, a topic dealt with in document E/ICEF/1990/L.13.

9. A major shift in the circumstances of children was occurring as a result of another initiative in which the Board had played a major role. 1990 had been declared the Year of Universal Child Immunization, and he was happy to report that according to the latest World Health Organization (WHO) statistics, the immunization coverage at the end of 1989 had reached 71 per cent globally, and that the gap between immunization against measles and immunization against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus had narrowed to 4 per cent. If that trend continued, immunization coverage would reach 80 per cent globally by the end of 1990, which would save the lives of more than 3 million infants and children annually. The success of the campaign had been due to two forces: the efforts of developing countries to reach all their children, and excellent international co-operation in which WHO had played an important role. Especially noteworthy had been the financial assistance provided by Canada, Italy, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and Rotary International, the latter alone having provided some $240 million. In future, the target would be to sustain the levels attained and to advance towards further goals like the eradication of polio by the year 2000.

10. The preparations for the World Summit for Children would be one of the major items to be dealt with at the current session and that question was dealt with in document E/ICEF/1990/12. The Executive Board would need to discuss the budgetary proposals for both the Summit and the related social mobilization activities, for which ceilings had been set at $1.5 million and $2 million respectively and for which more than $1 million had been pledged to date.

11. The world was capable of saving and improving the lives of children at extremely low cost, both financially and politically. To that end, UNICEF had established a number of goals that were set forth in document E/ICEF/1990/L.5, which was the culmination of an extraordinarily extensive consultative process. The refinements which had been made with regard to the goals following careful review and participation at the country, regional and global levels were set forth in document E/ICEF/1990/CRP.2. The goals reflected not only the views of UNICEF, but also the judgement and aspirations of the leading experts, policy-makers and agencies in the field and would also serve as the focus for closer and more effective collaboration with other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system. It was important to emphasize that the activities outlined in the UNICEF strategies paper for children in the 1990s would also benefit the environment. On World Environment Day, 5 June 1990, a special report on children and the environment, drawn up in conjunction with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), would be made public. The more complex goals for the 1990s were based on experience gained in achieving relatively straightforward goals, such as those

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relating to child survival and development activities, particularly immunization. Nevertheless, while it was not expected that every country could pursue every goal at once, in every country UNICEF support programmes would be directed toward achieving an appropriate set of goals in the main sectors of health, education (with an emphasis on gender equity), water and sanitation, and nutrition. The goals must be adapted to the specifics of each country situation and the relevant decisions to be taken at the country level. He anticipated a consultative process similar to that which had helped establish the goals.

12. With regard to regions, Africa would remain the region of highest UNICEF priority measured by per capita support, although, in total, Asia was still the largest area of programme expenditure. The Fund's special initiatives seemed well-adapted to the particular needs of the countries of Latin America and the Middle East. Likewise, the World Summit for Children could generate support, without which it would be difficult to achieve goals which, taken together, represented the most ambitious endeavour for children ever undertaken.

13. Referring to the funding of UNICEF programmes, he said that the medium-term plan projected 3 per cent real growth, while setting a fund-raising strategy of 6 per cent. Increased funding would be sought for education as well as nutrition and water and sanitation. Funding for health programmes would retain its present priority.

14. The evaluation of the Fund's external relations, requested by the Executive Board, had confirmed that, on the whole, activities in that field had been quite effective and it had made it possible to focus on a number of areas for potential improvement. The Fund hoped to use the instruments of advocacy, information and fund-raising to provide more effective support for programmes. The evaluation would also serve as a guide in work to improve co-operation with the national committees.

15. With regard to children in exceptional circumstances, there were four situations in which the Board must provide guidance to enable UNICEF to make an effective contribution. In South Africa, where the child death rate was 10 times higher for blacks than for whites, the evolving situation created the opportunity for some non-racial non-governmental organizations to operate independently of the Government, giving hope of reaching those in need while adhering to General Assembly policy. Some of those organizations could benefit from exposure to the UNICEF approach to the planning, preparation, implementation and evaluation of programmes for child survival, protection and development. Assistance of up to $1 million per year was proposed.

16. Referring to children in war, he said that the Fund's policy had been to seek to reach children everywhere, even in the midst of war. In that regard, the Fund's relations with local authorities did not constitute any legitimization or recognition of such authorities. During the 1980s, UNICEF had sought to insulate or protect children from the consequences of conflicts. That had given rise to the concept of the Days Of Tranquillity, which had been pioneered in El Salvador and

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applied in Lebanon, where it had led to the immunization of a large number of children, and in the Sudan, where it had made it possible to ship supplies to conflict areas. In the 1990s, that principle would have to be maintained in the Sudan, where the civil war was continuing, and extended to other countries in the Horn of Africa, where millions of children were at a great risk because of civil conflict.

17. In Eastern Europe, new policies of restructuring were creating some problems, especially for the most vulnerable, and were revealing some long-standing problems affecting children which could potentially be solved by using experience gained elsewhere. Although that issue would be addressed in the Programme Committee, it should be pointed out that UNICEF could not fail to respond to formal requests. At the same time, the Fund's response must not be at the expense of its priority co-operation with developing countries or give the impression that it was giving up or diminishing its commitment to children in the developing world. It was envisaged that less than $1 million per year of the Fund's general resources would be used for such purposes.

18. With regard to children affected by AIDS and the number and situation of orphans and street children, the Fund's involvement was increasing as conditions worsened in many countries, particularly in Africa. There were proposed annual expenditures of approximately $2 million through 1992. Half of that amount would come from general resources and the other half from supplementary funding. Those funds would be used in country programmes, as distinct from expenditures in Eastern Europe or South Africa, where UNICEF did not have country programmes.

19. In terms of the positive aspects of an era of great change, it should be pointed out that the initiatives adopted in the 1980s had begun to bear fruit and were mutually reinforcing. The success in child survival and development activities especially immunization, had given UNICEF confidence that it would be possible to bring the Convention on the Rights of the Child into force. The new attention given to children's rights resulting from activities in support of the Convention had raised people's awareness of the fact that providing health services for children was not just a nice thing to do, but was the obligation of adult society. The awareness of what could be done on behalf of children at so small a cost had contributed to progress toward the World Summit for Children. The Summit in turn was having an accelerating effect on the ratification and implementation of the Convention and on child survival and development activities, especially immunization. It was becoming clear that the boost which the Summit would give to action on behalf of children would make it possible to achieve the goals and strategies for children in the 1990s. If those goals were realized, the lives of 50 million children would be saved during the current decade. The attention given to children's issues and the confidence gained through progress in universal child immunization had contributed to the convening of the World Conference on Education for All. Within the framework of that synergistic interaction, progress in education would make a profound contribution to children's health and ensure that their rights were respected and that their rightful place, high on the world's political agendas, was maintained. In that context, the Executive Board considered

(Mr. Grant, UNICEF)

the needs and possibilities for children with concern, commitment and professionalism; and, once again, the secretariat looked to the Board for guidance, decisions and support.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (E/ICEF/1990/1/Rev.1)

20. The CHAIRMAN said that at the previous meeting of the Executive Board in February 1990, it had been agreed that the Board should decide whether the drafting sessions should be held concurrently with the meetings of the Committees or at night meetings. The Bureau proposed that, at the current session, that should be decided each day on the basis of recommendations by the Chairmen of the Board or the Committees. A specific recommendation on the way to deal with that question in the future was contained in document E/ICEF/1990/L.15/Corr.1, which had been submitted in connection with agenda item 5 in accordance with Executive Board decision 1989/3. That document contained a draft proposal by the Chairman on Executive Board procedures, documentation and decision-making process and would be forwarded to a drafting session for consideration by the delegations concerned. With regard to the work of the Programme Committee, it was proposed that agenda items 2 and 3 (strategies for children in the 1990s and the medium-term plan, 1990-1993), which were closely related, would be considered together.

The agenda was adopted.

GENERAL DEBATE

21. Mr. MOUSSA (Egypt) said that the current session of the Executive Board was significant because of the child-related events which had been taking place in recent months at the international level. In particular, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be mentioned. Egypt had played an important role in drafting the Convention, as well as in its adoption by the General Assembly. Egypt had not only been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention but was also altering its legislation in order to implement it as soon as possible. Another important event was the initiative taken by the six Heads of State, including Egypt, to convene a World Summit for Children, an initiative related to Egypt's leading role in child care. Egypt had successfully carried out programmes dealing with nutrition, measures to combat dehydration, and the promotion of culture among children through the establishment of libraries and cultural centres. The World Conference on Education for All, held at Bangkok, had been a third important event. Egypt had also participated in a regional conference for the Arab countries, held at Amman, on the subject of education for all by the year 2000; at the conference important decisions had been adopted for those countries.

22. The document entitled "Development goals and strategies for children: priorities for UNICEF action in the 1990s" (E/ICEF/1990/L.5) had Egypt's support, and his delegation wished to underscore some of the aspects of that document which were necessary for guiding the work of the Fund. First, child care required that care should also be given to mothers. That was why Egypt had established, in 1988,

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(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

the National Council for Maternal Care. Further, the segment of the UNICEF budget allocated for the programme for women should be increased. Secondly, child care should include education, which should be no less important than health. For that reason, it was necessary to re-examine the goals of UNICEF whose strategies for the 1990s included eight goals for health but only one for education. A third important issue was that of the new problems affecting children, such as drugs and AIDS. The current session should consider those new problems and devise policies for combating the harm which they could cause to children. Fourthly, the issue of child development and survival was very important and was related to all other aspects of society, for which the strategies must be broad and take account of cultural, economic and hereditary factors.

23. Egypt was closely following the rapid development of events in Eastern Europe and their implications for future UNICEF programmes. The world's current interest in Eastern Europe should not be detrimental to children in developing countries, who suffered most and required additional international support. The Executive Director's recent statement on the subject was encouraging. Further, Africa and the Middle East were developing regions which required a great deal of attention. The persistence of apartheid in South Africa had a negative impact on children and undermined all the values on which a free society should be based. Children under apartheid required special attention to ensure their development. Egypt was the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity and it welcomed the Bamako Initiative and supported the efforts to ensure its success. The Middle East was in a constant state of instability as a result of Israel's occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories for almost a quarter of a century. Palestinian children were daily victims of Israeli oppression which, for example, closed down schools and thus deprived children of their right to education. At the current session, Israel's policy of occupation and its savage methods should be, once again, condemned and that country should be made to respect the international instruments applicable to occupied territories, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the international instruments on the rights of the child, in particular the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

24. Egypt was pleased that UNICEF supported the national organizations and institutions for mothers and children. That strategy was extremely important and should be given priority in order to apply the principle of self-sufficiency, which was the quintessence of development, particularly in a country which, like Egypt, had adequate institutions and the necessary human resources. His delegation also believed that products required for UNICEF programmes should be imported from developing countries for use in other developing countries so as to strengthen co-operation among those countries. Finally, he commended the role of UNICEF and its programmes in Egypt which had been highly successful in the area of nutrition and measures to combat drought and, at the same time, he called upon UNICEF to set priorities for the programmes in specific countries which should be in keeping with the needs of each society and their particular circumstances.

25. Mrs. PALME (Sweden) said that, in 1989, 90 million children had been born and that millions of women and children had sought refuge, in external or internal exile and in growing urban slums, from the violence of war and poverty, and millions of women and children had died of hunger or from the lack of medical care. In 1989, the United Nations had adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and UNICEF had provided assistance to 128 countries; for example, the Fund has assisted Namibia and the tens of thousands of people who had returned to that country after years of exile.

26. Since half of the worlds inhabitants were children, child-related concerns were not peripheral but reality itself. In taking account of the interests of children at the highest political level, at the World Summit for Children, a number of facts must be considered first, more children died in wars than did soldiers, and wars disrupted children's health care and education; second, apartheid not only humiliated entire societies and kept them in poverty but also sowed the seeds of unrest and further atrocities, as in South Africa, where the infant mortality rate was 10 times higher for black children than for white, and in the front-line States, where destabilizing elements forced children to participate in the slaughter of their own family; third, over-exploitation of the environment meant that mothers were overworked and undernourished and that children became ill and died before reaching adulthood, as a result of which poverty was passed on from one generation to another; and fourth, because of the debt burden, Governments did not have the necessary funds to invest in education and health or to satisfy the basic human right to adequate nutrition.

27. She hoped that the participants at the World Summit for Children would undertake to include in their political agendas the goals of the United Nations system and, in particular, those of UNICEF, so that knowledge and technology could be used for food production, health and child care, education, vocational training, construction of homes and workplaces, sanitation and water supply. The Government of Sweden welcomed UNICEF's participation in the preparations for the Summit.

28. The Convention on the Rights of the Child brought back into focus the role of the United Nations as a guardian of the human right to life. In March 1990, her Government had proposed to Parliament that the Convention should be ratified without delay. The bill submitted also contained a chapter on international development co-operation in the context of the Convention. The Convention stipulated that States Parties could appeal to the international community for assistance when their own resources were fully utilized and their needs remained unmet. Sweden endorsed the goals and strategies of UNICEF and considered that gradual implementation of the elements of a balanced set of interventions was realistic in the light of scarce resources. In 1989, Sweden had once again been the principal donor to UNICEF because it was convinced that the Fund was an efficient channel for high-quality development assistance and co-operation. Sweden was also convinced that the international community should implement the agreed policy to allocate 0.7 per cent of GNP to official development assistance, which would mean an additional $50 billion every year.

(Mrs. Palme, Sweden)

29. The debt problem was central to the well-being of children. Noteworthy in that connection were some innovative and constructive UNICEF initiatives on debt relief for child survival. The idea of establishing a joint trust fund with the Inter-American Development Bank for debt swaps at a significant discount was an example of how debt relief at the regional level could be approached. Nevertheless, the idea raised a number of questions which required further study: debt swaps alone could not solve the economic crisis and should not lead debtor nations to neglect sectors and programmes affecting children. Sweden endorsed the observation made by UNICEF that any contribution to funds necessary for debt relief should be in addition to ordinary contributions. It might be asked, however, whether expectations of additional contributions were realistic because most donors appeared reluctant to contribute even up to the agreed levels.

30. The recent World Conference on Education for All had been a productive exchange of experiences. The World Declaration and the Framework for Action to Satisfy Basic Educational Needs were the fruits of a long process. The Conference had shown that different groups could reinforce each other and had stressed that education for real development was a complex issue, which had to be dealt with in a concerted manner. Full advantage must be taken of the initiatives and skills of non-governmental organizations; yet, they could only function as catalysts for comprehensive governmental programmes designed to guarantee education for all. Sweden took note of and endorsed the increased involvement of UNICEF in education for all, within its specific mandate.

31. Among the strengths of UNICEF was its prompt reaction to change. Initial exploratory contacts regarding Eastern Europe had given rise to proposals for UNICEF assistance in that region without having to draw on regular financial resources. Where development needs were obvious and new commitments were emerging in a new political climate, development co-operation was justified. For that reason, Sweden believed that the proposed transitional UNICEF assistance to Eastern European children was well founded.

32. The result-oriented child advocacy activities of UNICEF and its operations in collaboration with other parts of the United Nations system in southern Africa were commendable. Nevertheless, UNICEF should build on the experience and resources of the region's inhabitants: their priorities must guide UNICEF activities and their capacity must be encouraged. Despite the new hopes recently raised, apartheid had not been abolished and mortality rates for black children in southern Africa were still extremely high. For the women and children of that region international support was a matter of life or death.

33. Mr. TRAXLER (Italy) said that the meeting of the Executive Board came at a moment of crucial importance for the United Nations system as was apparent from the current preparation of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade and the forthcoming Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to International Economic Co-operation, in particular to the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries. That outstanding event would partially overlap with the Executive Board meeting.

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

Italy had raised the issue of the overlap on several occasions, requesting that it should be avoided.

34. The current era was one of great challenges and unexpected opportunities. UNICEF had a significant role to play in that connection, because problems affecting children directly affected the future of mankind. While impressed by UNICEF's efforts to analyse problems and establish goals and strategies, Italy had also observed that UNICEF's resources were being increasingly earmarked for a global analysis and for promoting several areas and issues of a global nature. Recognizing that the problems affecting children were becoming increasingly interdependent and universal, Italy was also aware of the limitations of available resources. At a time when needs were enormous and goals more ambitious, it was important not to lose sight of what could be realistically achieved; hence the need for a clear set of priorities, attainable goals, realistic strategies and concrete actions. General development assistance and general advocacy could not be the basis of UNICEF's activity.

35. The more interdependent problems affecting children became, the more strategies and programmes required greater efforts of co-ordination and interaction between UNICEF and development agencies. UNICEF should co-operate fully with the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 on the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system so as to promote close co-operation among the field representatives of United Nations agencies at the country level and better co-ordination and integration of development assistance programming. To that end, UNICEF could help Governments to devise national programme frameworks for establishing priorities with regard to their co-operation with the United Nations system. It could also assist the Director-General in the study for defining the United Nations system's integrated operational response to the national programme frameworks to be devised by the Governments of developing countries. Similar co-ordination was needed in other areas, such as education, environment, commodities, and debt relief, which required concerted strategies and action.

36. Child survival and development must be a primary objective of each country because international support could be effective only as a complement to sound national policies. UNICEF's main goal should therefore be to help developing countries strengthen their capacity to provide their people with basic services; UNICEF's programmes and activities were sustainable only where recipient Governments demonstrated their clear and realistic interest.

37. Community participation in development was of particular importance because it was both a means of promoting and an aspect of human rights and democratic and free institutions, which were essential goals of development. Similarly, as indicated in the medium-term plan (E/ICEF/1990/3), it was a prerequisite for sustaining actions, disparity reduction, the empowerment of women and national capacity building. In that regard, the activities of the International Child Development Centre, in Florence, were to be commended.

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

38. The scope of problems affecting children was widening: children in especially difficult circumstances, child abuse, drugs, AIDS and children in urban areas. For example, approximately 36.5 per cent of the world's children would be living in urban areas by 1995 and their number would increase three times faster than in rural areas. Those problems were common to developing and industrial countries alike and called for new forms of solidarity.

39. The World Summit for Children could provide an opportunity for directing the attention and weight of world public opinion to the basic problems of children and for increasing awareness of the principles and strategies of Child Survival and Development, provided that the Summit focused on selected issues and concrete and attainable goals and called for clear commitments from each country with respect to its policies and strategies.

40. Greater attention should be paid to strengthening UNICEF's administrative and operational capacity to render emergency assistance. His delegation would welcome further details and comments from the Secretariat on the chapter on strengthening UNICEF's response capacity (E/ICEF/1990/11). UNICEF, in co-ordination with the agencies involved, could play a greater role in the future and Italy commended the results achieved in 1989 by the emergency operations in southern Sudan. His Government had pledged to UNICEF a contribution of 1 billion Italian lire (approximately $US 800,000) for an emergency assistance programme for the most vulnerable groups in Asmara (Ethiopia), which would help to provide essential drugs and medical equipment, strengthen health centres and support an expanded immunization programme.

41. His Government was fully committed to achieving the goals of Child Survival and Development. For the current year, Italy's contribution to UNICEF's general resources had increased from 52 billion to 55 billion lire (plus 10 per cent in dollars), despite the severe budgetary restrictions that had obliged his Government to reduce, or maintain at last year's level, its contributions to most multilateral development agencies. Future contributions to UNICEF and other United Nations agencies would not maintain the annual growth rate of past years, particularly so far as supplementary funds were concerned. Italy would have to be more selective and would allocate national resources for development co-operation to the agencies which were most operationally efficient and cost-effective and had the most realistic and well-focused programmes. UNICEF had proved to be a highly valuable and efficient channel of multilateral development assistance, and Italy would do its utmost to ensure that it would remain so in the future.

42. Mr. YAHYA (Indonesia) said that recent world events, including the decrease in regional conflicts and ideological tensions, gave the international community some hope for substantial and unprecedented gains in the social sector. The forthcoming World Summit for Children was an indication that world priorities were evolving in a more humanitarian and constructive direction. The occasion would give UNICEF an opportunity to focus world attention on the plight of millions of children who were still perishing needlessly or living in absolute poverty. It would also enable world leaders to make commitments to securing the safety, well-being and development

(Mr. Yahya, Indonesia)

of children, the world's most precious resource. Furthermore, it would provide an excellent opportunity to maintain the momentum towards ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, which set forth universally accepted minimum standards for child treatment and development.

43. His optimism for the future, however, was tempered by the chronic problems in the international economy. Although success had been achieved in some developing countries, many had not managed to break out of the cycle of poverty, and remained snared in a debilitating debt trap. Unless there was a fundamental change in domestic and international policies, there would be only modest improvement in living standards in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and certain parts of Asia, where about 54 per cent of the world's children lived. It was appalling to think that more than 100 million children would die from illness and malnutrition in the coming decade, when many of them could be saved by known and inexpensive techniques. The problem was not only a lack of funds, but also a lack of determination and awareness. Political will, vision and leadership must therefore constantly be strengthened and people educated if the next decade was to be one of human development and not mere survival.

44. The increase in immunization coverage had significantly reduced morbidity and mortality, preventing an estimated 2 million deaths from measles, pertussis and neonatal tetanus (E/ICEF/1990/2). His delegation was encouraged to hear that the 80 per cent coverage target was expected to be attained by the end of 1990, and that disease-surveillance control would receive high priority.

45. Indonesia was now embarked on the second year of its fifth five-year development plan, and was preparing for an era of self-sustained development projected to commence with the sixth five-year development plan, which would begin in 1994 and would cover the first five years of the second long-term (25 years) development programme. The fifth plan explicitly recognized that one of the pre-conditions for self-sustained development was development of human resources, which meant, inter alia, better health and nutrition and more active and expanding participation of the people, in order to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life of the human being and society. The plan included a set of strategies for establishing an order of priorities for the major objectives and targets, which included reducing the infant mortality rate by at least 15 per cent, to 50 or less per 1,000 live births; reducing the maternal mortality rate by 25 per cent to no more than 340 per 1,000 live births; reducing protein-energy malnutrition among under-fives by 20 per cent, and reducing nutritional anaemia among pregnant women by 27 per cent, to 40 per cent. The plan emphasized the rights and the role of women, particularly as mothers, managers of the household, family income earners, leaders at all levels of society and key actors in improving community awareness and social mobilization of child survival and development. The plan consisted of two components: in the first place, advocacy and policy support for sensitizing government officials and community leaders to the important issues relating to the well-being of women so as to develop effective policies and basic service programmes, and in the second place, programmes to enhance the role of

(Mr. Yahya, Indonesia)

women in comprehensive early child development. The plan also called for an increase of the coverage of clean water from 30.5 per cent in 1988 to 60 per cent in 1993 in the rural areas, and from 65 per cent to 80 per cent in the urban areas.

46. UNICEF co-operation with the Government of Indonesia included support for specific priorities and groups targeted for poverty alleviation, with sustainable community participation. Its focus was on a core group of basic services with a range of support activities coherently designed to have a direct impact on accelerated improvement of infant, child and maternal survival. By implementing the fifth five-year development plan, Indonesia was committed to other global endeavours initiated by UNICEF, notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the creation of alliances for children, basic education for all and the achievement of health for all by the year 2000.

47. Mr. MONTAÑO RESA (Mexico) said that given the dynamics of the changes currently taking place, it was not sufficient merely to reiterate goals that had already been proposed; it was necessary instead to strive to achieve those goals and to analyse the strategies so as to make them practicable. That called for a complex process of thorough and difficult transformation, and the Board had to correlate substantive goals with effective means in order to achieve satisfactory results.

48. UNICEF's medium-term plan contained nine fundamental programmes; Mexico was contributing to all of them through various institutional mechanisms and it was co-ordinating the participation of different social groups. Mexico was carrying out a modernization process in which planning played a significant role, the objective being to promote change and to bring about social justice. The changes that were taking place in various nations and in international relations were having repercussions throughout the world. A nation's prospects were based on its own economic and political changes; however, lack of international co-operation could limit even the best domestic efforts. That was why all countries, regardless of their level of development or ideological position, were facing difficult situations because of the changes that were taking place in the world.

49. Mexico was engaged in the formidable task of building a bridge between democratic ideals and economic realities. During the 1980s, Mexico had been faced with serious economic problems and had to make painful adjustments. These had been compounded by many social needs, which had increased as the crisis deepened. The Government had responded by modifying structures, adapting institutions and introducing new policies in order to be able to compete in the world and to meet the demands of its people, especially the children.

50. UNICEF had for many years been co-operating with programmes designed to assist Mexican children, and his Government appreciated UNICEF's efforts and participation. The major thrust of the co-operation programme for 1990-1995 had been defined, and the Government would make sure the funds designated had the maximum productivity and effectiveness, in order to improve the living standard of Mexicans in the areas of health, assistance to children, nutrition, assistance to women, education and sanitation and potable water.

(Mr. Montaño Resa, Mexico)

51. It was an honour for Mexico to host international meetings relating to UNICEF initiatives, such as the international congress on the planning and management of educational development, which had been held in Mexico City in March, and the International Earth Day, which was to be held in June and to which all were invited. Mexico would also be participating in the World Summit for Children, scheduled for September, to renew the commitment to join efforts to promote international solidarity.

52. Mr. RANSOME-KUTI (Nigeria) said that, in a rapidly changing world, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa feared that the developed world would turn its attention to the countries of Eastern Europe which held good prospects for rapid economic growth and productive investment. Nevertheless, the sub-Saharan countries continued to pin their faith on organizations such as UNICEF, whose values were human, to continue to support their efforts to improve the quality of life of their peoples. Mr. James Grant continued to exercise his creative and humanitarian leadership, which had enabled UNICEF to attack the causes of mortality, morbidity and suffering of mothers and children throughout the world, and they believed that UNICEF would maintain the high quality of its activities in the African countries.

53. Nigeria was a major beneficiary of UNICEF assistance and its efforts to put in place a primary health care system all over the country would not have been possible without UNICEF's support. At the same time, the support of both the secondary and tertiary health care systems was essential in order to provide a total service for the people. To that end, the health services were gradually being decentralized and the local government health management capability was being strengthened. The local authorities were assessing their health problems and the resources available and, on that basis, were writing the plans for their primary health care systems. At the end of 1989 most States had set up state, local government and district primary health care committees and teams of primary health care workers had been formed in each district. During the past two years the main concern had been to set up village health services and the management system to support and link them with the higher levels of health care. The goal of the plan was to provide primary health services where people lived and worked, under their control and serving as the point of contact between the national services and the people.

54. The expanded programme on immunization implemented by the Federal and state Ministries of Health and by UNICEF pre-dated the introduction of the primary health care system. Its integration into the system was progressing very well and the programme had saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. The oral rehydration therapy programme, which was implemented through training of family members, particularly mothers, and was also used in hospitals and health centres, had also helped.

55. The large number of children who had survived the hazards of infancy testified to the enormous success of the child survival and development programme. One of the preventable causes of infant mortality was neonatal tetanus. It was essential to give urgent consideration to the reason why very few affected countries had

(Mr. Ransome-Kuti, Nigeria)

fully utilized the opportunities provided by UNICEF for the administration of tetanus toxoid to pregnant mothers so as to prevent or eliminate the disease.

56. Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. Simple and cost-effective methods for rapidly reducing maternal deaths were available and must be introduced without delay. Also the decline in breast-feeding in the developing countries must be reversed as it had serious implications for child health, survival and nutrition. The practice among manufacturers of distributing breast-milk substitutes to maternity wards in third world countries free or for a minimal charge was a powerful incentive for mothers to abandon breast-feeding.

57. Dracunculosis (a disease caused by the guinea worm) could easily be eradicated through the provision of safe drinking water and health education. It was gratifying to note the positive impact which UNICEF-supported water supply projects were having on the control of that disease of poverty and underdevelopment. Nigeria fully supported UNICEF's new initiative for the control of onchocerciasis which was a major cause of blindness in many parts of Africa and impeded socio-economic development by forcing people to abandon rich agricultural lands.

58. Nigeria fully supported the Bamako Initiative and plans were nearing completion to implement pilot schemes in four local government areas. The Government of Nigeria firmly believed that cost recovery in the supply of drugs was essential as a means of financing the health services but that action to that effect must always take due account of the need for equity.

59. UNICEF was to be congratulated on the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which Nigeria had decided to ratify without further delay. Nigeria also supported the World Summit for Children and the President had approved a donation of $50,000 for that purpose. It was also convinced of the importance of the World Conference on Education for All, since it had been shown that higher levels of education resulted in improved health and quality of life for the population. It behoved UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO and other governmental and non-governmental organizations to mount an implementation programme similar to that which had been mounted to achieve the goal of health for all by the year 2000.

60. Mr. SCHNEEWEISS (Observer for the German Democratic Republic) said that the documents before the Executive Board demonstrated the growing dimension and complexity of UNICEF's tasks, the challenges faced by the organization and the demands which must be met. The German Democratic Republic had warmly welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had already signed the Convention; efforts were being made to ensure that the newly elected Parliament ratified it as soon as possible.

61. The German Democratic Republic had from the outset supported the convening of a World Summit for Children. It welcomed the initiative taken by the six Heads of State and the statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on

(Mr. Schneeweiss, Observer, German Democratic Republic)

8 February 1990 regarding the convening of the Summit and pledged to take an active part in the preparations for the Summit and in the Summit itself.

62. The German Democratic Republic had undergone fundamental changes in the past few months and was currently moving towards unification with the Federal Republic of Germany. Nevertheless, the German Democratic Republic wished to assure the Executive Board that the people as well as the National Committee for UNICEF were fully aware of their great moral obligation towards the concerns of people in third world countries, particularly in regard to the situation of children. The National Committee for UNICEF and the people of the German Democratic Republic had actively supported that cause in the past and, within the ongoing revolutionary process of democratization, could render even more assistance to UNICEF so as to increase the volume of aid needed to improve the situation of children in Africa, Asia and Latin America. That also reflected the readiness for solidarity which was deeply rooted in the people.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1990 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 16 April 1990, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Miss DIEGUEZ (Mexico)

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General debate (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. de LA CHEVALERIE (France) said that, occurring symbolically on the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Child, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was a crucial event, because, for the first time in the history of international law, the rights of the child were codified in the form of a treaty having binding force for its signatories. France, which had played an active role in the drafting of the Convention, in particular, by hosting a world round table on the topic "Today's children - tomorrow's world" on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, would continue to work for the implementation of the Convention. It intended to make every effort to ensure the success of the World Summit for Children, which was scheduled to be held in New York in September. The Summit would afford an opportunity for wide-ranging consideration of the problems facing children today, the strategy to be adopted in this area by the international community and the role of UNICEF.

2. Three decades of development had led to profound upheavals in traditional societies, rampant population growth that was distorting the age pyramid, rapid urbanization, and an often unjust international and national economic order that was accompanied by the disappearance of forms of social solidarity that existed in the past, the exclusion of entire groups of the population and the loss of hope among young people. The vast majority of children in the third world, especially in Africa - where nearly 50 per cent of the population was under 15 years of age - lived in societies that were undergoing constant change and were sometimes in the process of disintegration, in broken homes and, above all, in permanent poverty. New forms of poverty and exploitation of children had emerged: there were street children, the selling of children, child prostitution, refugee children, child drug addicts, not to mention the 14 million children who still died each year because of inadequate nutrition or care or the new threat posed by the AIDS epidemic (more than 40 per cent of the secondary school students in some towns of the third world had tested positive for the AIDS virus).

3. The favourable economic situation of the industrialized countries made it their duty and afforded them the means to ensure the exercise of fundamental rights by their children, and the problem faced by children and adolescents in those countries had more to do with the quality of life than with survival itself. Children were increasingly prey to restlessness, which was reflected in delinquency, drug abuse and, in some cases, suicide. The desire of couples in industrialized countries to have children had also given rise to certain forms of trafficking, as a result of which international co-operation was needed to monitor the adoption of children from other lands, while maintaining the private character of such arrangements.

(Mr. de la Chevalerie, France)

4. The decisions taken by the World Summit for Children should fit in with a comprehensive development strategy and broader thinking about the future of society. The Summit might take into account the conclusions of the conference of Nobel laureates held in Paris in 1988. Obviously, the Summit could not miraculously banish all the ills besetting children; what it should do, however, was to adopt a package of measures on behalf of the poorest of the poor, along the lines of measures adopted in the context of the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand, and the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in Paris in the autumn. It was vitally important that the participants in the Summit should not be satisfied with discussing abstractions, engaging in wishful thinking or adopting mere declarations of good intentions. The Summit should spell out priority guidelines in specific terms and work out practical arrangements for enhancing co-ordination. Apart from UNICEF, many other international organizations dealt with issues of relevance to children, such as UNESCO, WHO, ILO and INTERPOL (which had recently emphasized action to combat crimes whose victims were minors), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (the 7 million refugee children accounted for nearly half of the world's refugee population). Such organizations should be involved in the preparations for and follow-up to the World Summit. However, given its specific mandate and the great popularity which its remarkable achievements had earned for it, UNICEF had the moral standing that made it the natural choice for the role of co-ordinator.

5. UNICEF should not, however, rest on its laurels. Immunization programmes were a case in point. While there was cause for satisfaction in the fact that more than two thirds of the children in the third world were immunized today, as against less than one quarter at the beginning of the 1980s, the impact of immunization activities continued to be limited and precarious, and there had even been considerable slippage in some countries, especially in Africa, but also in the Middle East and Asia. That fact should prompt questions about the need for adjustments in such large-scale programmes, which mobilized considerable resources but which had apparently reached the limits of cost-efficiency. Other forms of action should provide for the setting up of hospital referral services and the establishment of a network of small decentralized health units run by better trained and better motivated health workers. Greater attention should be paid to the thinking of the people to whom programmes were targeted so that they would accept and actively participate in such programmes, which, even though well-designed from the technical standpoint, were sometimes perceived as imposed from without by a distant technocracy and sometimes met with inertia, if not outright resistance. Ways should be sought to combine modern medicine and traditional medical practices. There was also a need to develop UNICEF's capacity to consider ways of intervening in crisis situations resulting from natural disasters or conflicts. In that connection, he welcomed the decisive action taken by UNICEF in the Sudan, under the Executive Director's personal leadership, and its action in Lebanon and Mozambique.

6. There was a constant need to have the intelligence and humility to question the methods for pinpointing needs and responding more effectively to emergencies. There was a need for a flow of information that would ensure that the Executive

(Mr. de la Chevalerie, France)

Board and the secretariat had full access to experience gained in the field. Lastly, UNICEF must be more open to exchanges with other institutions, such as the International Children's Centre, which for more than 40 years had played a vital role in epidemiological surveys and national and international assessments of the effectiveness of vaccines. The secretariat and the Board must remain attentive to the national committees, which often had considerable influence on policy makers and public opinion. Thanks to their contacts with the best informed circles, the national committees were breeding grounds for ideas and initiatives. The French National Committee, which had collected more than 11.5 million francs in 1989, had a wide following among the French people. As an immediate measure, the Board needed to rationalize its working methods. He commended the secretariat for the quality, objectivity and frankness of the report on UNICEF's external relations by the Director of the Evaluation Office. That should lead to a more accurate definition and rationalizing of the responsibilities and activities of the Geneva Office.

7. In conclusion, he summed up the hopes placed in the World Summit for Children by quoting a passage from the message delivered by the spokesman for the Nobel Prize winners at the end of their conference in Paris, affirming that man's fate was not sealed and that anything was possible.

8. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that, thanks to the activities of UNICEF, the lives of nearly 2.5 million children were saved each year. Progress continued to be made in the expanded programme on immunization and in the promotion of oral rehydration therapy. UNICEF had initiated programmes to combat acute respiratory infections and AIDS. Through the Bamako Initiative the Fund had enhanced primary health care and pursued its efforts in the area of safe drinking water supply. The growing awareness throughout the world of issues relating to children's welfare was largely the result of the work done by UNICEF for over 40 years.

9. Japan was in the process of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session. He was pleased that UNICEF had proposed the holding of a world summit for children; it was to be hoped that that meeting would lead to genuine political commitments at the highest levels. However, any discussion of political and religious issues, which might divide participants, should be avoided. The budget for the summit should be reviewed further in the light of the comments by ACABQ. The matter should be thoroughly discussed at the current session of the Executive Board.

10. By its decision 1989/11, the Executive Board had requested the Executive Director to carry out an in-depth analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of current UNICEF external relations policies, functions, guidelines and activities. The analysis which had been undertaken (E/ICEF/1990/L.4) contained many recommendations which ought to be reflected, to the extent possible, in future UNICEF activities; his delegation hoped that the matter would be given thorough consideration at the current session. Effective programme implementation implied the setting of priorities, the selective allocation of funds and co-ordination of national, bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes. UNICEF must continue

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

to promote the expanded programme on immunization and oral rehydration therapy and implement programmes to combat acute respiratory infections, AIDS and guinea worm disease. His delegation was alarmed to note that AIDS had become an obstacle to further reductions in infant mortality rates, which had in fact declined in Africa and other areas. AIDS had left many orphans. In co-operation with WHO and other organizations, UNICEF should undertake information and education campaigns to cope with the epidemic.

11. The problem of street children was becoming increasingly serious in Asia and other parts of the world and should be addressed by UNICEF. Japan was concerned by the lack of progress in the field of education, particularly in developing countries, and therefore welcomed the convening of the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand. The UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education Policy should play a constructive role in follow-up to the Conference. His delegation welcomed the decision by UNICEF to increase the resources allocated for education; however, priority should be given to primary education, and duplication of UNESCO programmes should be avoided.

12. As a child's most important guardian was its mother, mothers played an essential role in programme implementation. His delegation thus supported the increase in expenditures for women's programmes. Once again, priority ought to be given to programmes for mothers and pregnant women, given the possibility of overlapping with programmes of other organizations. His delegation supported the general thrust of document E/ICEF/1990/L.13, on safe motherhood. As population growth was one of the major causes of poverty and environmental degradation, UNICEF should undertake activities which complemented those of UNFPA, particularly by seeking to promote birth spacing, which had a direct bearing on maternal and child welfare.

13. In view of the steady increase in resource levels, his delegation wished to commend the Executive Director for his fund-raising efforts. Japan believed that UNICEF activities should be financed primarily from general resources so as to ensure neutrality and flexibility, and had thus contributed mainly to general funds. However, Japan also attached importance to emergency operations, such as Operation Lifeline Sudan, although it contributed to their financing on a case-by-case basis.

14. His delegation was concerned by the fact that, during the 1980s, recession and economic adjustment programmes had frustrated efforts to lower infant mortality rates and enhance the health, well-being and education of children in developing countries. The political upheavals taking place in Eastern Europe would also affect the well-being of children. UNICEF's role was thus all the more important.

15. Mrs. MBELLA NGOMBA (Cameroon) said that the World Summit for Children, to be held in September 1990, would afford an opportunity to define child protection objectives more clearly after a decade in which most developing countries had endured a major economic recession that had resulted in worsening conditions among vulnerable groups, particularly children. Certain Governments had had to make

(Mrs. Mbella Ngomba, Cameroon)

severe cut-backs in spending for primary education and public health. At the Summit ways of revitalizing economic growth could be discussed, taking due account of human needs, especially those of children, whose plight could only improve in a less harsh international climate. The Bamako Initiative constituted an efficient way of disseminating knowledge and should not be limited to providing the poor with low-cost primary health care but should be expanded to other areas essential to social welfare, such as improving women's health and education, safe motherhood, better nutrition, drinking-water supply, sanitation, and basic education for special groups such as the disabled. The preservation of certain traditional values was also an important aspect of the Bamako Initiative. To achieve those goals, substantial external support would be required, as stated in paragraph 92 of document E/ICEF/1990/3.

16. She commended the work done by an international group of high-level experts chaired by Mr. John Evans, which, after two years of extensive research, had confirmed the importance of global health research and biomedical breakthroughs in simplifying medical procedures and lowering costs.

17. With regard to UNICEF external relations, she hoped that the recommendations set out in document E/ICEF/1990/L.4 would enhance co-ordination between UNICEF, the national committees and non-governmental organizations on the one hand and between UNICEF headquarters and the field offices on the other, and that the comments of the field offices would be taken seriously. Cameroon was in the process of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which constituted a comprehensive set of provisions aimed at protecting children. Finally, she congratulated Mr. Olikoye Ransome-Kuti, Minister of Health of Nigeria and professor of paediatric medicine, on receiving the Maurice Pate Award.

18. Mr. PETTITT (United Kingdom) began by discussing the Executive Board's working methods and decision-making process. The working methods, which had been shaped at a time when UNICEF had had a far less complex programme than its current one, had not been satisfactorily modified. While some worthwhile practices, such as discussions between senior staff and delegations prior to Board meetings, had been developed, bad habits had also taken hold: too much documentation, received too late for study, etc. Holding a single annual session without intervening meetings of subsidiary bodies was a drawback. The UNICEF Executive Board had a special character and ought to be retained, but its decision-making process was ineffective. His delegation welcomed the draft decision submitted by the Chairman to improve working methods, particularly the suggestion to hold an organizational session as a means of rectifying current weaknesses. Those proposals did not go far enough, however, and more drastic changes would be required.

19. Regarding the preparation of goals for the international community, his delegation deplored the fact that goals were developed in different international forums without a clear understanding of the commitments that decisions to be taken would entail. As indicated in document E/ICEF/1990/L.8, the United Nations system, in its work in the field, lacked identifiable goals and strategies capable of mobilizing international support. He endorsed the approach taken in document

(Mr. Pettitt, United Kingdom)

E/ICEF/1990/L.5, according to which broader goals must be adapted to local circumstances, and expressed support for the document as a whole.

20. The paper was one of the three building blocks for a successful World Summit for Children. The second building block would be the experience gained at the World Conference on Education for All. The United Kingdom was happy to have participated in the definition of a concept of education capable of meeting the real needs of society in conformity with the ideas proposed to the Conference by UNICEF. The United Kingdom hoped that the declaration to be adopted by the Summit would make reference to the link identified by the Conference between education, maternal and child health care and the creation of a better environment in which people could fulfil their potentials.

21. The third building block was the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Government of the United Kingdom intended to sign as soon as possible.

22. With regard to the Summit, he wished to make two points. First, the idea of holding the Summit had elicited general enthusiasm but it had been difficult to reach agreement on when the Summit should be held, since the proposed date had been considered too early. Second, the Summit should be concerned with issues on which the endorsement of Heads of State or Government could make a measurable difference. It should create a climate conducive to realistic and positive interventions and action.

23. Turning to other items on the agenda, he stressed that the evaluation of UNICEF external relations had far surpassed the expectations of his delegation. The Executive Board had been given a thorough account of the views of key people involved in the programme and had ideas which would be helpful in shaping future programmes. The Secretariat paper responding to the evaluation had perhaps been disappointing for some members of the Board; nevertheless, he noted with satisfaction that the evaluation structure was becoming stronger, and that the number of evaluations was increasing and their quality improving. He hoped that such progress would continue and that greater account would be taken of evaluation in future reports to the Executive Board.

24. The Executive Board should clarify its thinking with regard to its response, through UNICEF, to the changing needs of Eastern Europe. UNICEF should provide assistance and guidance to those countries which requested it. Some had expressed the concern that the provision of assistance to those countries might lead to a deflection of resources or attention from the developing world. That was a problem which bilateral donors had to solve. The United Kingdom had made complicated arrangements to ensure that its new aid would be genuinely additional to its existing programmes. The United Kingdom hoped that UNICEF could adopt a similar approach. The national committees could perhaps play a special role in that regard.

25. He welcomed the paper on acute respiratory infections (E/ICEF/1990/L.7), which could be the subject of a decision.

(Mr. Pettitt, United Kingdom)

26. Finally, he wished to comment on the place of UNICEF in the United Nations system. Document E/ICEF/1990/L.8 contained ideas and proposals which merited attention. In the international effort to make the United Nations system of operational activities effective and co-ordinated, the experience of UNICEF and its active participation were important. First, because UNICEF was potentially more independent than other agencies. It was both a funding and executing body, and any abuse of that independence would be damaging. Secondly, as a development agency, UNICEF was not tied to specializing in technical co-operation or capital aid, and had experience in the programme approach to development and to national capacity building. Thirdly, since the UNICEF Executive Board met every year in April, it was the first major governing body to begin work required by General Assembly resolutions on operational activities and, as such, UNICEF set the standards by which other bodies examined their obligations with respect to co-ordination and joint action. Thus, the strengthening of the resident co-ordinator system, the improvement of programming processes, or the harmonization of programme cycles using the planning cycle of the Government as a reference point were in keeping with the policies or aspirations of UNICEF.

27. The Executive Board should decide how to respond to General Assembly resolution 44/211 on operational activities. Since the resolution called for a triennial review, UNICEF had a rather large degree of freedom for reporting on such policies as effective field links, better programming processes, more extensive use of national execution, or the simplification of procedures.

28. Despite the questions which could be raised about UNICEF, he reaffirmed the commitment of his Government to the work and ideas of UNICEF, which the British public continued to regard as the embodiment of the best of the United Nations system.

29. Mrs. CORNAZ (Observer for Switzerland) commended UNICEF for its work on development strategies for children. The situation of children was a matter of crucial importance, since tomorrow's society would depend on the fate of today's children and the way in which they grew up. Moreover, most of the ills which beset children, far from being inevitable, had specific causes which could be combated by appropriate actions and measures.

30. She referred to three of the principles which had inspired the paper on strategies (E/ICEF/1990/L.5). First, the principal goal of development was human well-being, the well-being of all. Secondly, economic growth was a means to development and could not be its end. Of itself, economic growth did not necessarily result in the satisfaction of basic human needs and could even go hand in hand with the deterioration of the situation of the poorest strata of society. In addition to the smooth operation of the economic system, it was essential to ensure the smooth operation of the social system, and UNICEF had a role to play in making sure that due account was taken of the social dimension. Thirdly, the worst problems resulted for the most part from a set of interdependent factors. Measures to combat such problems should not be limited to piecemeal actions aimed at achieving sectoral objectives: any strategy should be intersectoral. While such

(Mrs. Cornaz, Observer, Switzerland)

conclusions were clearly expressed in the initial chapters of the paper on UNICEF strategies, they were, regrettably, absent from the last two chapters of the paper.

31. Three factors were in her view fundamental for the success of any policy aimed at improving the situation of children: first, the strengthening of the capacities of countries to plan and carry out coherent programmes by themselves; second, the priority given to the struggle against poverty, the principal cause of most problems; and third, the concrete attention which should be given to the needs and specific constraints of the poorest population groups.

32. Such considerations should serve as an inspiration for individual countries in developing their own national strategies, and they deserved mention in the resolution approving the UNICEF strategies. Switzerland had prepared a draft resolution based on and complementing the draft proposed by the Secretariat; the Swiss draft resolution would be made available to any interested delegations.

33. She noted with satisfaction that, in the paper on UNICEF strategies, maternal health, child health, nutrition, water supply and sanitation, basic education and children living in difficult circumstances were designated as priority areas. She was particularly pleased that maternal health and nutrition had received due attention. However, she was concerned that maternal health no longer appeared as an explicit priority in paragraph 120 of document E/ICEF/1990/L.5, in the Executive Director's report or in the medium-term plan of UNICEF.

34. The question of children in especially difficult circumstances should be an explicit priority area and should not be buried among the "other concerns", as was currently the case. She drew attention to two categories of children: first, street children, for whom UNICEF could and should play an important role by stimulating new and creative approaches and, second, children in prison and children subjected to physical and mental torture for the purpose of exerting pressure on their parents. Her country believed that it was the duty of UNICEF to show concern for such children, at least in its individual dealings with the relevant authorities. That was a difficult and delicate task, but one which fell within the purview of UNICEF.

35. Mr. JIMENEZ (Observer for Chile) welcomed the report of the Executive Director on UNICEF action for children in 1989.

36. The situation in Chile, which had only recently returned to democracy, continued to be difficult since a considerable part of its population, including 1,177,627 children under five years of age, lived in conditions that placed them at risk. Moreover, the social disparities and inequalities urgently required a readjustment of social development policies and programmes in order to remedy certain current problems, which included the mortality rate of children under five years of age, absenteeism in schools, child malnutrition, unemployment and so on.

37. First of all, the Chilean Government would carry out a health policy based chiefly on primary health care in the urban and poor rural areas. In addition to the traditional programmes for mother and child care, the policy would feature

(Mr. Jimenez, Observer, Chile)

certain innovations for the protection of adolescents. A programme being carried out in the rural sector with UNICEF support would service 99 instead of 33 municipalities. Secondly, the Government would begin reconstructing its hospital network which had been badly damaged by the crisis. Thirdly, a special effort would be made to promote health and prevent illness. The fourth component of the Government's initiative would focus on the environment and its impact on health. Lastly, the Chilean Government would promote the institutional development of the public sector.

38. Referring to document E/ICEF/1990/L.5 entitled "Development goals and strategies for children: priorities for UNICEF action in the 1990s", he agreed with the general principle on which the document was based, namely that the development of human capabilities and meeting basic human needs must be the essential concerns of UNICEF in the 1990s. The social policy of the new Chilean Government would be directed towards the human being, particularly children. It would be an enormous task because, from the beginning of the 1980s, steadily declining appropriations for health and education had had disturbing consequences: only 30 per cent of the children from two to five years attended pre-school.

39. Document E/ICEF/1990/L.5 rightly stated that the neglected needs of children must be accorded top priority in the 1990s. His Government endorsed that point of view and would be focusing particular attention on the health and nutrition of girls, the education and training of women, immunization campaigns, the reduction of malnutrition and, above all, on two problems in particular: the early physical and psychosocial development of children in difficult circumstances.

40. His delegation fully agreed with the strategies proposed in the document, particularly with respect to the disparity reduction, community participation, area-based programme approaches, applied research, social mobilization, national capacity-building and building the economic base for meeting human goals.

41. Referring to document E/ICEF/1990/L.4, he welcomed the proposal to enhance the complementarity between the planning and management of UNICEF's external relations. In that connection, his delegation thanked UNICEF for the contributions it had made from the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC). That had enabled the UNICEF Office in Chile to carry out a social mobilization and communication strategy which had sensitized the country to the needs of women and children and provided a mass of quantitative and qualitative information on the living standards and needs of Chilean children. His delegation therefore supported the request to increase SAFLAC's budget from $2 million to $3 million.

42. His Government would submit the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Congress for prompt ratification. His delegation was gratified to know that UNICEF would provide the secretariat for the World Summit for Children and was prepared to contribute, within its means, to the Summit, in which President Aylwin wished to participate.

(Mr. Jimenez, Observer, Chile)

43. As Chilean Minister of Health, he thanked the UNICEF Office in Chile which, by gathering, analysing and publishing socio-economic indicators at the regional and local levels, had given the new Government a better understanding of the living conditions of women and children in Chile. The work of the UNICEF Office had also provided the Government with data on regional disparities and inadequacies in pre-school enrolment. His delegation was grateful to UNICEF for increasing the general resources to be allocated to Chile as from 1991.

44. Mr. KAZMI (Pakistan) said that UNICEF was conducting its activities in a world of growing economic disparities: out of a total of 2 billion people reduced to a state of abject poverty as a result of indebtedness and the population explosion, almost 60 per cent lived - or, rather barely survived - in the least developed countries. The human, financial and technological potential sufficient to end the situation existed at the global level, but that potential had still to be effectively utilized.

45. Many changes had taken place in the world since the Executive Board of UNICEF had met in April 1989. Developing countries feared that, as a result of commitments made to assist the Eastern European countries, multinational efforts for the rest of the world would slacken. There was also the fear that international lending conditionalities would place a heavy burden on the most underprivileged sectors of society in the developing countries.

46. In view of that situation, Pakistan was making every effort to mobilize additional resources. It could not hope to obtain those resources either from new loans at a time when it was already sagging beneath the weight of its debt service, or from new taxes. The only remaining hope was growth in its gross domestic product (GDP), estimated at the rate of 5.3 per cent in 1990. In order to prevent that surplus from being absorbed by population growth, his Government had made family planning one of its main priorities.

47. A national health policy would be announced in the near future. Based on the concept of decentralization, and allowing considerable latitute for creativity at the periphery, it would accord high priority to environmental protection, sanitation, water supply and housing - and even higher priority to child health. His Government hoped that the private sector would contribute to the effort and that self-financing of certain services would become possible. It was exploring the possibility of introducing a health insurance scheme in the urban areas and encouraged private initiatives to develop models for rural health care.

48. His delegation noted with satisfaction from the report of the Executive Director that health remained the largest component of UNICEF's programme. It welcomed the programmes implemented in order to ensure child survival and development, particularly through immunization and oral rehydration therapy (ORT). However, as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade drew to a close, only 60 per cent of the population in developing countries had access to safe drinking water and only 25 per cent to adequate sanitation.

(Mr. Kazmi, Pakistan)

49. His delegation supported UNICEF's decision to give preference to technologies which were inexpensive and enabled immediate practical application - of which immunization, oral rehydration therapy and the acute respiratory illness programme were very fine examples. Pakistan had a satisfactory record in those areas and wished to continue receiving information on evaluation studies which were essential for identifying areas in need of strengthening. As it prepared to introduce a major child survival programme with assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Pakistan would be relying to a large extent on the help and experience of UNICEF.

50. Faced with the social costs of adjustment programmes, Pakistan was contemplating programmes for the alleviation of poverty but it would also have to take budgetary constraints into account.

51. In that connection, the importance of the Essential Drugs Programmes - whereby pharmaceutical products might be marketed at reasonable costs - to the primary health care system should be highlighted. His Government was making every effort to implement the programme in its hospitals with a view to reducing the soaring costs of medical services.

52. His delegation noted with interest the childhood disability programmes. Its own programmes stressed early detection and community-based rehabilitation.

53. His delegation supported UNICEF's policy on women and had made the issue one of its priorities, for women and women's organizations played a pivotal role in development: they helped to organize the community, administered health care and assumed responsibility for implementing child survival and development (CSD) programmes. However, women themselves, must be assured of health care and safe motherhood and must be able to practise birth spacing and family planning. At the same time, formal and non-formal educational opportunities must be developed for them.

54. The importance of the World Summit for Children had already been emphasized. Pakistan was gratified that its Prime Minister had been elected Vice-Chairman of the Summit, as Pakistan had been among the countries to make the proposal.

55. Despite the bleak economic conditions in the developing countries, the international situation gave reasons for hope. The relaxation of ideological tensions, progress towards democracy and the cooling of conflicts made it possible to envisage a peaceful world and, consequently, a reduction of military spending and increased investments in the social sectors. Among them, it was impossible not to imagine child survival, protection and development. Thus, Pakistan welcomed the role played by UNICEF in leading the efforts to improve the quality of life for women and children.

56. Mr. DOGRAMACI (Observer for Turkey) said that the report of the Executive Director of UNICEF for 1989 was cause for satisfaction - 42 countries had reached their goal of universal child immunization by the end of 1989 and that programmes for the control of diarrhoeal diseases were moving ahead with greater momentum, and for dismay - in many African countries, the situation of children was worse than it was 20 years ago.

57. Turkey applauded the role played by UNICEF in the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which embodied an approach based on the best interests of the child. It noted with satisfaction the emphasis placed by UNICEF on the advancement of women, efforts to combat acute respiratory infections and the revitalization of primary health care.

58. The immunization campaign was having a positive impact in Turkey, where the cold chain was currently firmly established. In spite of the isolation of certain areas and the influx of refugee children from neighbouring countries and Afghanistan, the Government was confident of achieving its goal of universal child immunization in 1990. It had set the goals of eradicating polio and neo-natal tetanus, but that implied a significant increase in vaccination of pregnant women.

59. A national campaign had been launched for the control of diarrhoeal diseases which, after acute respiratory infections, were the number two killer of children under five years of age in Turkey. The Government had promoted oral rehydration therapy and had undertaken major campaigns to educate the public, especially pharmacists and physicians. Yet, the results were still mixed, demonstrating that a long-term effort was required.

60. In May 1989, with the country's highest-ranking officials in attendance, a National Congress on Policies for Children in the 1990s was inaugurated. Members of the Government present at the inauguration had made concrete commitments: to reduce the infant mortality rate to below 50 deaths per 1,000 in 1990 and to below 40 deaths per 1,000 by 1992; to promote education for girls and to prepare them for their future role as mothers; to expand recreational facilities for children and to develop a clean and safe environment; to establish courts for juveniles under the age of 18: and to review progress in the ratification by Turkey of Conventions of the International Labour Organisation. The wife of the current President of the Republic, Mrs. Semra Ozal, had chaired most of the sessions of that Congress, behind which she had been the driving force. In January 1990, her pioneering work in maternal and child health had been recognized by the award of the United Nations Child Survival Medal.

61. Turkey welcomed the forthcoming World Summit for Children. The President of the Republic had announced his intention of participating in the Summit. As the first meeting of its kind held at the Head of State or Government level and the first North-South-East-West summit, the event was inspiring great hopes. Turkey expected from it the forging of a global commitment to enhance the status of children and to reduce the current child death rate of 40,000 a day, the majority of those deaths occurring in developing countries. UNICEF estimated that the death rate could be reduced by about one third, or by 50 million lives, in the 1990s if

(Mr. Dogramaci, Observer, Turkey)

Governments and the public could make strong commitments, which then had to be translated into economic and social policies sensitive to the needs of youth. The Summit should also establish the priority of child survival and development and the corresponding obligation of society to make the necessary resources available for that purpose, in good times or bad, in both industrialized and developing nations. The Turkish National Committee for UNICEF had made a donation of $25,000 for social mobilization activities in support of the Summit.

62. The first objective of the Summit should be to contribute to the realization of the development goals and strategies for children in the 1990s (E/ICEF/1990/L.5), since, as Turkish experience had shown, involvement of national leadership was likely to inspire genuine national mobilization.

63. In the context of the Grand Alliance, UNICEF was collaborating with other institutions, both within and outside the United Nations system. Noteworthy in that regard was the co-operation with the International Paediatric Association, whose members included most paediatricians and child health workers in over 100 countries. In the joint seminars and workshops, in which WHO frequently participated, attention was concentrated on the causes of child morbidity and mortality which were the most common and which could be prevented or combated by simple, low-cost methods. One such workshop had just been held in Nairobi, immediately before the Fifth African Paediatric Congress and the Second Congress of the International Society for Tropical Paediatrics. Another joint workshop was planned for Santo Domingo that year, aimed at the Latin American countries. Also worthy of mention was the forthcoming publication of a new quarterly with international distribution, International Child Health, which was a joint effort of UNICEF, WHO and the International Paediatric Association.

64. Turkey commended UNICEF for its innovative and active advocacy of children, carried forward by its work in external relations.

65. In its early days, UNICEF had worked in a war-torn Europe; it had gradually extended its efforts and activities throughout the world, placing special emphasis on the developing countries. It was currently being asked to assist children in the entirely new context of Eastern Europe. It could not refuse requests for aid coming from that part of the world, provided that the assistance was relatively modest and temporary and did not diminish the support currently provided to the developing countries.

66. Mr. POULSEN (Observer for Denmark) said that, to meet the challenges of the 1990s, UNICEF had the task of establishing a balance among its various activities and between its own activities and those of other United Nations programmes.

67. The desired balance between advocacy activities - which were chiefly the responsibility of the national committees - and development activities had not yet been achieved; consequently, his delegation welcomed the consideration by the Programme Committee of the evaluation report on external relations. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which his Government was in the

(Mr. Poulsen, Observer, Denmark)

process of ratifying, should, like the World Summit for Children, give a new impetus to advocacy activities not only in the traditional areas of health and education but also in others, such as child labour, protection from abuse and neglect and drug abuse. His Government hoped that a sufficient number of countries would ratify that important instrument so that it might enter into force shortly.

68. Achieving a balance between UNICEF activities and those of other development agencies remained a prerequisite for sustainable development. Strengthening the cohesion among the various assistance programmes of the United Nations system was vital and UNICEF must play its full part in the co-ordination efforts within the system. Thus he could only welcome the participation of UNICEF in the work of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), while stressing the equal importance of co-ordination in the field. The central role of the United Nations resident co-ordinator should therefore be respected and co-ordination with other donors should be increased.

69. His delegation believed that UNICEF had not yet achieved an appropriate balance among its various activities. Nevertheless, the document on development goals and strategies for children in the 1990s (E/ICEF/1990/L.5) demonstrated that changes were under way. The proposed strategies responded in several respects to the concerns of the Danish delegation since those strategies were largely designed to re-establish the balance among the various components of UNICEF assistance, such as health, nutrition, water supply, sanitation and education. UNICEF was not merely an organization responsible for protecting child health - it was also a development agency whose target population was children and mothers. In the context of primary health care, greater emphasis should be placed on three delicate and controversial questions: family planning, AIDS and essential drugs.

70. UNICEF must give family planning and population issues a proper place in its activities. Such services, including access to abortion where it was legal, must be available to women. Reduced population growth was a prerequisite for sustainable development in many parts of the world and thus also for the greater welfare of mothers and children. AIDS was increasingly becoming a risk for mothers and children and the magnitude of the problem was often underestimated or suppressed. As part of its primary health care activities, UNICEF must disseminate more information on AIDS and the precautionary measures to be taken. It must also devote greater attention to essential drugs in the context of primary health care. It was part of UNICEF's advocacy role to change attitudes in order to promote the social and economic welfare of mothers and children. Increased efforts in those three areas were needed. The risk of losing some contributions in the short run must not deter UNICEF from dealing actively with those issues.

71. His Government, and most likely a number of others, would closely follow UNICEF's efforts in those three areas. He therefore requested the Executive Director to deal with them in his report to the 1991 session of the Executive Board.

(Mr. Poulsen, Observer, Denmark)

72. The final challenge for UNICEF, which was well aware of the needs of children in the 1990s and well prepared to make a significant response to them, would be to achieve a better balance between spectacular short-term activities and longer-term objectives. It must ensure that child immunization continued, and especially that the developing countries concerned expanded their own capacity to take over the work. The strategies for children in the 1990s clearly included national capacity building, and it must be given high priority.

73. Ms. SKARD (Observer for Norway), noting the dramatic changes that had taken place in many regions since the last session of the Board, said that her country had been following with particular attention the efforts to achieve a political, social and economic restructuring of the Eastern European societies, and had supported them financially.

74. Since the international community had only limited resources, it was understandable that the developing countries should be concerned about the possible channelling off of financial aid to the Eastern European countries. The situations in those two groups of countries was certainly not comparable, in the case of either living standards or the mortality rates of children under five. Numerous developing countries were also struggling to reform their societies and cope with nearly overwhelming problems relating to external debt, deterioration of terms of trade, inflation, reduced investments, negative capital transfers, population growth and depletion of resources. Her Government believed that it should be possible to assist the Eastern European countries in different ways, and official development aid in Norway would be reserved for the developing countries. Although UNICEF's role was to promote the interests of children all over the world and contribute to ensuring their well-being regardless of creed, race, sex, nationality or political situation, its assistance must be focused on the mothers and children in the developing countries most in need, and its involvement in Eastern Europe must be limited. Norway understood the information note on children in Eastern Europe as meaning that funds from general resources should not be allocated to Eastern European countries.

75. UNICEF should not only give priority to the poor countries, but also seek to protect the most vulnerable groups within those countries in times of economic crisis and restructuring, by advocating adjustment with a human face. It must also do more to improve the situation of street children, disabled children, abandoned or abused children, or those who were the victims of war.

76. Even though UNICEF's resources had increased in recent years, its budget was extremely small in relation to the needs, and the necessity of strengthening its financial base prompted a special plea to those countries which had the means to do so to show further generosity and contribute particularly to the general resources.

77. Regardless of the amount of resources available, the basic question was how best to use them. Delicate balances must be struck among the various areas of activity, and the priorities did not always appear to be sufficiently thought out. For instance, the holding of a World Summit for Children, which it would have been

(Ms. Skard, Observer, Norway)

better to discuss at the ordinary session of the Board in April 1989 rather than hastily and tardily in December, did not seem to be the most rational use of scarce resources. Her delegation had the same uneasiness regarding the emphasis in recent years on UNICEF's external relations.

78. With regard to the programme sectors, she was happy to note that the priorities were becoming more balanced, with a reduced emphasis on child health while activities relating to nutrition, water, sanitation and education were being strengthened. An integrated approach was usually the most effective. Immunizations, for example, would be of only limited value if there was no increase in people's understanding of the importance of health measures. Also, educational efforts should provide the people with the means of improving health, nutrition, water supply and sanitation.

79. Another balance to be struck was between short- and long-term results. The importance of immunization campaigns had been demonstrated, but an emphasis on rapid increases in immunization coverages had led easily to a neglecting of more long-term investments in infrastructures and administrative capacities, a problem that was particularly acute in Africa as a result of the deteriorating economic conditions. UNICEF's recent efforts, in connection with the Bamako Initiative, aimed at finding new ways of maintaining and expanding primary health care services were of special importance.

80. She also welcomed the fact that all aspects of UNICEF-assisted programmes - financial, technical, managerial and political - had been emphasized in the medium-term plan in order to ensure their sustainability. An example of the enhancement of local and national capacities could be found in Tanzania, where she had been able to observe UNICEF-assisted health activities executed by district and local authorities. The empowerment of women was particularly important in the strengthening of national capacities. Without proper attention to the realities of women's lives and the full use of their potential, development efforts would not be sustainable. Another basic condition for sustainability was the preservation of the environment and the reduction of population pressures. In many developing countries, the lack of family planning was having a negative impact both on maternal and child health and on the maintenance of health services. Besides incorporating an environmental dimension in all UNICEF-supported activities, it was therefore urgent to make family planning an integral part of the efforts relating to health and education.

81. While many challenges remained, including economic crises, expenditures on armaments, environmental degradation, inequalities and poverty, the increasing emphasis placed on human resources development and improvement of the situation of children was encouraging. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Norway was preparing to ratify during the current year, would represent a practical step towards ensuring child welfare.

82. Mr. SIMAO (Observer for Mozambique), describing the situation in his country, said that between 1975 (the year when it gained its independence) and 1981, economic and social programmes had led to significant progress in a number of areas. National output had increased by more than 11 per cent, adult literacy programmes had been launched, the number of health posts had increased (from 326 to 1,115 between 1975 and 1986) and the number of health centres had risen from 100 to 211; the coverage of the immunization programme had risen from 40 per cent to 80 per cent of children below one year of age in Maputo, thanks mainly to UNICEF assistance. The number of doctors had more than doubled, while nursing staff had increased by 25 per cent. Priority had been given to the health sector and the share of the national budget allocated to it had risen over the period from 4.6 per cent to 11.6 per cent, representing 2.4 per cent of GNP. As a result of the economic crisis, war, natural disasters and the programme of economic recovery, the share of funds allocated to the health sector had been reduced as from 1985 and had fallen to 4.6 per cent in 1987 (or approximately 1.4 per cent of GNP) and to 3.5 per cent in 1988. Primary health care, however, had continued to receive a substantial share of the health sector budget, currently 65 per cent. International assistance had made a considerable contribution in recent years to maintaining essential services somehow or other. The number of health posts had fallen and only 30 per cent of the population lived near a health post. The number of health workers was inadequate in spite of the priority given to training. Supplies, appropriate technology and medicines were in short supply and the country was totally dependent on imports. The essential drugs programme had made it possible to increase distribution at the primary health care level. Too few doctors were being trained (the annual number of graduates was only about 20) and the health services were therefore obliged to rely on the services of expatriate staff. The patient referral system often failed to work and the means of transport, whether ambulance services or for the transport of health workers, the supply of drugs and other essential equipment for the health posts, were insufficient.

83. The principal health problems were extremely high infant mortality rates, a high incidence of infectious and other diseases, general malnutrition and related conditions, as well as the absence or inadequacy of obstetric and neo-natal care. The groups at high risk for death and disease (estimated at 4 million persons in 1989) included, apart from women and children, people displaced as a result of the war or natural disasters. The infant mortality rate, which appeared to be the highest in the world, was a measure of the extreme vulnerability of Mozambican children. The basic data contained in the country programme recommendation for Mozambique (E/ICEF/1990/P/L.6) were eloquent. The epidemiological profile of Mozambique was characteristic of an underdeveloped country, extremely poor owing to its colonial heritage, war, a series of droughts and the severity of the economic crisis. Diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections, malaria and measles were the principal causes of death. Cases of tuberculosis (estimated at 10,000 annually) and leprosy were numerous and 80 cases of AIDS had been recorded. About 6 million people suffered from malnutrition. Most families, in both the urban and rural areas, could be classified as vulnerable inasmuch as their income and food production were very precarious or totally inadequate for their needs.

(Mr. Simao, Observer, Mozambique)

84. The war of destabilization had aggravated the situation. The number of civilian victims during the three previous years had been estimated at almost 200,000 and between 200,000 and 300,000 children had become orphans or been abandoned, frequently suffering trauma and disfiguration. Demographic changes had placed a severe strain on the infrastructure and services in urban areas which had received an influx of people seeking refuge, with the result that the country had come to depend on international assistance in order to overcome its difficulties.

85. The strategies proposed to cope with problems on such a scale were set out in the recommended programme co-operation for the period 1990-1995 (E/ICEF/1990/P/L.6). They sought to give direct help to the women and children affected by the emergency who were living in conditions of absolute privation and misery and to reduce the vulnerability of the groups at highest risk. The main thrusts of the programme were emergency assistance, access to basic services, and food security. Another objective was to strengthen the planning, management and delivery capacity of the services concerned with child survival and development. Emphasis had also been placed on the training of national personnel and on the education of the general public about health and other programmes concerned with child development and survival.

86. Mozambique was currently co-operating with UNICEF in the implementation of a number of survival and development child programmes, particularly the expanded programme on immunization which had led to high coverage rates, especially in some urban areas.

87. Peace initiatives gave grounds for hoping that normal living conditions might be re-established, refugees might be able to return to their homes and social services might be expanded in rural areas. The recommended programme, which reflected the commitment of the Government of Mozambique to enhance the living conditions of its people, would contribute greatly to ensuring the well-being of all Mozambicans.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1990 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 17 April 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:	Miss DIEGUEZ	(Mexico)
later:	Mrs. PALME (Vice-Chairman)	(Sweden)
later:	Miss DIEGUEZ (Chairman)	(Mexico)

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General debate (continued)

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Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Cuna, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SIMAI (Observer for Hungary) expressed his delegation's appreciation to UNICEF for the intellectual leadership and professional guidance that it had given to many countries in the areas of health, education and children; for the role it had played in the preparation and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; for its rapid humanitarian response to the changes in Central Eastern Europe; and for the close and efficient co-operation which it had established with other United Nations agencies and with non-governmental organizations.

2. The interaction of global and domestic problems had triggered a political, economic, social, ecological and moral crisis in Central Eastern Europe which had caused the collapse of the ruling régimes in many countries of the region as a result of their inability to respond to the crisis and its sources. While there was no justification for restructuring global assistance programmes in favour of Central Eastern Europe simply because of its delicate geo-strategic position, it was in the interest of the whole world that the countries of the region implement the current changes at the least political, economic and human cost. Assistance to those countries was justified if they solved their internal problems peacefully and became more efficient participants in the world economy and partners in international relations, thereby opening the road for more effective global co-operation in which the United Nations system and UNICEF in particular would play a central role.

3. In Hungary, the present crisis was such that debt servicing represented 16 per cent of annual gross domestic product; the economy had been in stagnation since 1985 and a 10 per cent decline was anticipated in 1990. Health and education expenditures, already low in 1980, had declined by 20 per cent in real terms in the 1980s, and the social burden had been further aggravated by the influx of refugees from Romania. One area in which the crisis was being felt most acutely was the situation of children. One third of Hungary's children lived in families which were below the poverty line, conditions in schools, children's hospitals and institutions for abandoned children were deteriorating and 40 per cent of the child population was facing serious problems of undernourishment as a result of the abolition of food subsidies.

4. UNICEF's special assistance to the countries of Central Eastern Europe should go basically to those areas where the experience of other countries might be important and, in exceptional cases, towards meeting certain temporary child health needs. Assistance might be needed in restructuring National Committees from a partially subsidized status to a self-sustaining one, so that they would be able to contribute substantially to UNICEF's programmes. UNICEF's involvement would not be just a humanitarian contribution but would be an efficient investment with high and fast returns. Mention should be made in that connection of the role played by the Fund's Geneva office, which would become even more necessary in the future, a consideration that must be taken into account in any future decisions on its operational autonomy.

(Mr. Simai, Observer, Hungary)

5. Lastly, UNICEF's voice must be heard at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation and be translated into efficient policies and actions.

6. Mrs. ASHTON (Bolivia) said that the world was at a point in its history where very positive, encouraging changes were taking place in East-West relations and there was a perceptible shift in thinking towards a new development ethic and towards helping the poorest social sectors. Unless those sectors were brought into the mainstream of a reasonable, equitable life, the harmonious, all-round, self-sustaining development of society was impossible. The time had come for Governments to show political will and implement programmes benefiting children in the developing countries.

7. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been approved by Bolivia's Chamber of Deputies and would shortly be approved by its Senate. The Convention emphasized the child's right to education and drew attention to the need for broad international co-operation in eradicating ignorance and illiteracy. The commitments made by participants at the recent World Conference on Education for All, held in Thailand, were of vital importance in that connection. Bolivia welcomed the Executive Director's proposal that UNICEF should increase its support for basic education programmes by 15 per cent in 1990 and 20 per cent by the year 2000. Her Government had given top priority to its educational policy, instituting a system which transformed schools into the focal point of the community and provided multi-grade primary education to over 60,000 children in 1,700 schools in rural areas.

8. Despite an international economic situation that was detrimental to its development and the implementation of a strict adjustment programme, Bolivia had managed to reduce its external debt by 30 per cent. That effort had increased its domestic social debt, however, causing unemployment, marginalization and a decline in living standards and affecting the most precious population group: children. Bolivia was none the less fully aware of the concept of "adjustment with a human face". In that connection, mention should be made of the proposal by UNICEF and the Inter-American Development Bank to set up a special trust fund in 1990 which would grant long-term soft loans for buying back the private external debt on the secondary market and permit investment in social development programmes. In 1985, the Bolivian Government had set up a Social Emergency Fund to reduce its social debt, a mechanism that had yielded satisfactory results.

9. Her delegation commended UNICEF on the review of the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (E/ICEF/1990/L.2) and believed that the Facility's effectiveness justified extending it to cover the period 1992-1993. It also endorsed UNICEF's medium-term plan for the period 1990-1993.

10. In its social policies, Bolivia had given high priority to overcoming the problems of children. In November 1989, in co-operation with UNICEF, it had launched the National Child Survival and Maternal Health Plan 1989-1993 aimed at reducing maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality rates by 50 per cent and

(Mrs. Ashton, Bolivia)

the mortality rate among children aged one to five, which was currently 50 per cent, to 30 per cent. In December 1989, the national immunization campaign for children aged under three had begun with the immunization of 300,000 children, and immunization campaigns would henceforth be permanent. However, universal immunization coverage was barely 50 per cent. Greater international co-operation was needed in order for Bolivia to join the countries who had achieved the goals of universal immunization. Generally speaking, the National Plan was in line with the strategy of health for all by the year 2000 and with the agreements on primary health care signed under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Special attention was also being given to groups living in extreme poverty in rural and urban areas, particularly women and young children. A campaign had been conducted among street children to produce an epidemiological profile that would make it possible to provide a free health care system for those children. The National Plan also recognized the importance of community participation in all maternal and child assistance activities and of co-ordinating such activities with nutrition and disease prevention activities. Lastly, it viewed as essential the involvement of such other sectors as education, labour and agriculture in promoting all-round assistance to the family and meeting families' basic needs in the context of socio-economic development in general.

11. Bolivia was a poor country characterized by major differences among its regions and population groups. That made it necessary to rally national efforts and mobilize appropriate international co-operation with a view to protecting the most vulnerable groups. The National Board for Solidarity and Social Development had drafted an operational plan for 1990 that was designed to provide assistance, protection, education and training to minors. The Board had 68 centres and homes for minors throughout the country and the National Department of Minors also operated 80 centres, homes and child-care centres nation wide.

12. Although acute respiratory infections were a serious problem that had led the Government of Bolivia to establish a national steering committee to work with UNICEF and WHO to develop an effective plan against such illnesses, the major cause of sickness and death among children was the high rate of malnutrition, which in 1981 had stood at 46.5 per cent. Determination and decisiveness would be needed to overcome this dramatic scenario of disease, malnutrition and lack of education in order to achieve the global objective of health for all in the year 2000. Accordingly, Bolivia thought highly of the plan to convene a World Summit for Children and expected to collaborate in the preparatory work. The only way to ensure a sustained response to the great challenges in the areas of health and education was to strengthen the internal underpinnings of development and, in that connection, note should be taken of the work being done by UNICEF in close collaboration with the Bolivian authorities, which had won for it the appreciation and devotion of the Bolivian people.

13. Mr. TREPCZYŃSKI (Poland) observed that, after 10 years of difficult negotiations, the General Assembly had unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thus opening a new chapter in the promotion of the welfare of

(Mr. Trepczyński, Poland)

children the world over. The enthusiasm and dedication of all were now needed for the Convention to be ratified and implemented. Another giant stride would be the convening of the World Summit for Children, which Poland supported; it was fully justified and desirable for UNICEF to be involved in organizing it. Both the Convention and the Summit made the question of children a world issue for the first time and strengthened the international feeling of responsibility for children. A considerable contribution in that connection was being made by UNICEF, which Poland would continue to support actively; UNICEF not only undertook to execute programmes for children but also drew the attention of Governments to their duty to create adequate conditions for the survival, development and education of children. That duty was the starting point for the strategy of adjustment with a human face that was needed in countries facing economic difficulties.

14. In Poland, fundamental political and economic changes were taking place that, in the transitional period, required sacrifices and would lower the living standards of the people. Therefore, the Government, the Polish Committee for UNICEF and non-governmental organizations in Poland were co-operating to protect the most vulnerable: a Children's Sub-committee had been established in the Polish Parliament and an official responsible for issues relating to children and the family would be nominated in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

15. His delegation expressed appreciation for the results of the UNICEF special mission to Poland and supported the proposed allocation of $1 million from UNICEF general resources to activities related to the situation of children in Eastern Europe, which would strengthen the UNICEF presence in the region and facilitate fund-raising in those countries in the future. New problems were emerging, such as the needs of children living in especially difficult circumstances as a result of the economic crisis, the growing number of refugees and the deterioration of the environment, that could not be resolved by traditional means and had to be included in the strategies for the 1990s. Poland therefore approved the research being conducted by the International Child Development Centre in Florence on the problems of children in industrialized countries.

16. Poland viewed favourably the targets of the medium-term plan and the strategies for children in the 1990s, and supported the relevant recommendations of the Executive Director, but it reserved the right to comment on certain points in the course of the session. It also observed with satisfaction the strengthening of inter-agency collaboration within the United Nations system and the success of the first session of the UNESCO-UNICEF Joint Committee on Education. Such collaboration could play a positive role in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The new activities and challenges facing UNICEF in the near future, especially in connection with the implementation of the Convention, would give special importance to its external relations, which were dealt with in document E/ICEF/1990/L.4, where many valid opinions and conclusions had been presented.

17. Lastly, his delegation wished to emphasize that the situation in the Eastern European countries required a strengthening of the Geneva office of UNICEF, whose

(Mr. Trepczyński, Poland)

co-operation it considered excellent. He nevertheless regretted to point out that on the staff of the Geneva office there was not one person from Eastern Europe, even though that point had been raised repeatedly.

18. Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands) said that the situation of children was linked to the developments in the world in which they lived, and therefore the strategies for children in the 1990s must be set in the context of the historical and political developments of the past months, the economic constraints in developing countries and the issues having to do with the environment, development and population. The Netherlands appreciated the efforts UNICEF had made to inspire greater interest in social objectives and considered the objectives referred to in the documents before the Board commendable, although not all of them were easily achievable since children's development was part of the complex process of eradicating poverty. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that unless the general environment in which children grew up was improved, the diseases that one managed to eliminate would probably be replaced by others.

19. National and international commitment was an important part of the process of defining priorities for development, as was the involvement of the people, which was what made for sustainable development. Action by parents and communities and their involvement in planning were essential for child survival and development. The Netherlands believed that the strategies should be adapted at the national and sub-national levels through the very appropriate country programming approach taken by UNICEF. It also felt that UNICEF should continue to build its inter-agency collaboration because it had neither the expertise nor the resources to implement the strategies by itself.

20. The forthcoming World Summit for Children, for the organization of which the Netherlands had pledged $100,000, would provide an opportunity to focus attention at the highest level on the problems of children. The Netherlands was prepared to participate in preparing the Final Declaration of the Summit, which should be brief, strong and eloquent, and it hoped that personalities outside of government circles could also have a say in its drafting.

21. On previous occasions, the Netherlands had expressed its appreciation for the Fund's efforts to achieve universal child immunization and had pledged a further $1 million for the fund-raising campaign launched two months earlier. It was now necessary to consolidate the results achieved in the field of health. The medium-term plan, however, proposed that UNICEF should broaden the scope of its activities, allocating an equal share of resources to health, education, and water and sanitation. In practice, that would mean that, by the year 2000, the proportion of funds spent on health would decline from 40 per cent in 1990 to 25 per cent, while the proportion of funds for education would increase from 7 per cent in 1990 to 25 per cent in the year 2000. That would mean a very significant change of orientation in the Fund's work. Although the Executive Director had said that funding for health programmes would maintain its current level and retain its current priority, his delegation wondered whether that was compatible with the orientations of the medium-term plan and how needs in the field

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

of health could continue to be met, if fewer funds were made available by UNICEF. Although the Netherlands supported the conclusions of the World Conference on Education for All, it wished to get a clearer picture of their practical implications because, in its view, a reduction in health activities would not be justified. Moreover, the question arose as to what extent UNICEF was equipped to carry out a reorientation in favour of education and how it intended to implement its plans in that area. His country's support for that reorientation would depend on the answers to those questions.

22. The Netherlands was very pleased to see that the Fund gave more attention to maternal health, the safe motherhood initiative and birth spacing, and hoped that UNICEF would keep the Board informed of the activities that it undertook in that respect. Although his delegation also supported the Fund's activities concerning acute respiratory infections (document E/ICEF/1990/L.7), it was not fully convinced about the proposed nutrition strategy, which the Netherlands would discuss in greater detail during the debate in the Programme Committee.

23. With regard to the external relations of UNICEF, his delegation considered the evaluation in document E/ICEF/1990/L.4 valuable and would ask further questions that had not been addressed in the document when the matter was considered in the Programme Committee.

24. Mr. CAPO-CHICHI (Benin) stressed the importance of UNICEF as a development agency dedicated as a matter of priority to mothers and children and welcomed the fact that the Fund had increased its presence and improved its programmes in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Nevertheless, the world economic crisis and the debt problem affecting those countries had worsened the living standards and health situation of most of the population to the point of threatening to lower the levels reached through the efforts made in recent decades. Structural adjustment measures had reduced resources earmarked for social programmes, particularly health care and education. The social consequences of that crisis in many cases constituted a source of instability for Governments and uncertainty about the future of the population. In that context, the change of government that had come about in Benin through a process of democratic debate based on dialogue and reflection opened up new prospects for the enjoyment of human rights, particularly the rights of the child, and for developing co-operation between UNICEF and Benin.

25. As indicated in the report of the Executive Director, there had been considerable progress with regard to child survival and development and the various countries should provide additional funds to continue those activities since it would be dangerous to discontinue them because of a lack of resources. In carrying out the medium-term plan for 1990-1993, the priority given to Africa should be strengthened because that was the continent where children and mothers were still most vulnerable. The necessary intervention in more developed regions, like Eastern Europe, should not involve a reduction in activities for children in the third world, particularly in Africa. His delegation supported the seven basic goals which should guide the Fund's strategies in the 1990s and considered that

(Mr. Capo-Chichi, Benin)

UNICEF should help ensure that they were taken into account in the discussions concerning the elaboration of the new international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade.

26. Through the implementation of the Bamako Initiative strategy, which promoted greater participation by the population, Benin and other African countries had revitalized primary health care services, which focused particularly on the poorest and most vulnerable groups, such as women and children. The international community should complement the efforts of Governments and the local communities by increasing its material and financial support for the implementation of specific programmes.

27. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been recently adopted by the General Assembly, was an important international instrument for protecting the basic rights of children throughout the world and deserved broad support by the Member States. His Government was taking steps to sign and ratify the Convention in the near future. Benin also welcomed the forthcoming World Summit for Children, which would enable the international community to reaffirm at the highest level its commitment to the survival, protection and development of children. The Summit would also be an opportunity for third world countries to mobilize all sectors of society in order to achieve the main goals for ensuring the survival, development and protection of children up to the year 2000. At the current session of the Executive Board, all the problems relating to the financing of the Summit and the co-ordination of its work should be solved.

28. His delegation supported the joint efforts of WHO, UNDP and UNICEF to combat the serious problem of AIDS. It also supported the Executive Director's recommendations concerning acute respiratory infections. In that regard, it was also necessary to co-ordinate the activities of WHO, UNICEF and other agencies in order to implement strategies to combat those diseases, which were a major cause of child mortality throughout Africa. Lastly, in view of the importance of women in the development process, the Executive Board should ensure that the problems of women were taken into account in the Fund's goals and strategies.

29. Mr. SITTHIPRASASANA (Thailand) expressed his delegation's satisfaction at the timely adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention would facilitate the implementation of numerous programmes for children which reflected their rights to survival, protection and development. That process would also be strengthened by the forthcoming World Summit for Children, which would coincided with the beginning of the fourth development decade. That meant that strategies for children could be linked to the international development strategy for the Decade.

30. His delegation was pleased to note that the new responsibilities of UNICEF in Eastern Europe did not pose additional commitments of UNICEF funds. During that period of historic changes in East-West relations, the United Nations, European national committees and other non-governmental organizations based in Europe should assume responsibilities for advocacy, social mobilization and fund-raising for

(Mr. Sitthiprasasana, Thailand)

children in the developing world. Those countries were now perhaps in a position to devote a fraction of their military expenditures to the cause of children.

31. During the 1980s, the economic environment had been hostile for developing countries, which had been forced to make painful adjustments. UNICEF sought to move beyond adjustment to development with a human face and planned, inter alia, to encourage and support in some countries the establishment of inter-ministerial task forces to prepare social action and social investment programmes for the most vulnerable groups. In that regard, Thailand would be pleased to share the experience of its own ministerial council on social issues.

32. With regard to emergency operations, Thailand appreciated the assistance rendered by UNICEF in respect of various natural disasters which had struck the country. It welcomed the developments in emergency preparedness and prevention, while underlining the need to tackle the root causes of the problem, which should be perceived in both its global and its local terms.

33. Some progress had been made, since the setting up of the National Commission on Women's Affairs. The Commission had amended the regulation concerning maternity and paternity leave. It was building an information centre for women and was preparing a five-year development plan for women which would be integrated with the national economic and social development plan. Thailand was willing to share its experiences in that field with other developing countries on both a bilateral and a trilateral basis; its offer also applied to the other activities in which it collaborated with UNICEF.

34. With regard to the goals for children in the 1990s, his delegation congratulated UNICEF for having prepared comprehensive plans and strategies, particularly with regard to children in especially difficult circumstances. Urgent and concerted efforts should be made to find more effective ways to help those children and to prevent more from falling into such circumstances. The solutions could never be straightforward, as the causes were varied and their effects on the children were both physical and mental. The goals and strategies for children and development in the 1990s would enhance those efforts, and his delegation looked forward to their approval during future deliberations of the Executive Board.

35. Ms. SETH (India) expressed her delegation's support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the forthcoming World Summit for Children. That event should be celebrated with the participation of all countries without cutting into ongoing development programmes. In recognition of UNICEF services, India had conferred on UNICEF the Indira Gandhi National Award for Peace and Disarmament for the year 1989, which also marked 40 years of collaboration between UNICEF and India.

36. The Government had adopted a multisectoral approach in order to provide adequate services to the child and to ensure that children's programmes found a prominent part in its national plans for the development of human resources. Its integrated child-development services scheme, launched 15 years earlier, was one of

(Ms. Seth, India)

the largest child-care programmes in the world, and its network covered approximately 40 per cent of the country. Today there were 250,000 centres in the country which delivered services critical to child survival and development, including supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-up services, pre-school education and nutrition, and health education to women. Further supplementing of the services provided was contemplated in four states through the launching of special schemes for girls, non-formal education of women and employment generation for women, along with the introduction of new technologies for communication and training. Efforts were being made to strengthen community participation by involving women's groups in both employment generation and the supervision of nutrition centres.

37. Maternal and child health were of primary concern in India's health-care system. Efforts were being made to bring down significantly the rate of maternal mortality by strengthening facilities for ante-natal care and by supplying iron and folic acid tablets to check anaemia, providing supplementary nutrition, promoting delivery by trained birth attendants, and screening to identify high-risk mothers and refer them to appropriate centres. A major factor in maternal mortality was improper birth spacing. India was therefore allocating substantial funds for family planning, and later in 1990 would launch a massive national campaign for safe motherhood. That would be the pillar of its policy for population control, the object being to delay the birth of the second child by three years and to encourage small families.

38. The immunization campaign already covered all the districts of the country and provided 55 per cent to 80 per cent of the children with various vaccines. India was engaged in a massive effort to produce all vaccines indigenously. It would place increasing emphasis on morbidity and mortality surveys under the immunization programme. Its diarrhoeal disease-control programme had not been matched by similar success, but good results were expected from the safe-drinking-water campaign, which would help in controlling such diseases, which accounted for one third of infant mortality. India had also launched pilot projects for the control of respiratory infection in small children, and a massive health-education programme for that purpose was to be launched. India had for many years been implementing programmes for the eradication of anaemia and prevention of blindness among children. Similarly, a goitre-control programme was being implemented by removing iodine deficiency through the sale of iodized salt.

39. India welcomed UNICEF's initiative in proclaiming the universal goal of basic education for all by the year 2000. It endorsed the strategy proposed for education in the Executive Director's report. Since India had become independent, there had been an immense development of education infrastructure, the number of primary-level institutions had tripled and enrolment of children in those institutions had gone from 38 per cent to 98 per cent. It had not, however, had the same success in increasing the literacy rate among women, which was still abysmally low at 29 per cent in 1985, although male literacy had risen to 57 per cent of the total male population. Investment for children had also increased and there was a great deal of political commitment to the goals of UNICEF.

(Ms. Seth, India)

40. Women were one of India's most precious assets for economic development, and the national programme for providing employment to women below the poverty line now covered 10.5 million women. However, their total number in rural areas alone had come to about 80 million in 1981. India also planned to increase employment opportunities for women in the urban slums as well. It had stepped up its efforts at intersectoral co-ordination between the departments of women and child development, education and health and family welfare, rural development and urban development. It was also concentrating on removing interregional disparities by concentrating on inputs in areas which were lagging behind in all parameters of social and economic development. India also intended to decentralize planning processes and to enhance people's participation in self-governing village communities and urban bodies.

41. With regard to regional co-operation for social and economic development in South Asia, the year 1990, which was being observed as the Year of the Girl Child by the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation, would be characterized by increased public awareness of the needs of the girl child through programmes for improving her health and raising her nutritional, educational and social status.

42. She proposed, for the consideration of the Executive Board, a two-pronged strategy which gave greater recognition to women. On the one hand, UNICEF should take an unequivocal stand in favour of the family planning programme, in the context of its thrust for safe motherhood and, on the other, it should support programmes for the social and economic development of women, the foremost attention being given to generating employment opportunities, because all studies conducted so far in India indicated that any addition to a woman's income was directly linked with improving her family's nutritional, health and educational status and adopting the norm of a small family. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that UNICEF's programme expenditure for women had increased from 23 per cent in 1987 to 29 per cent in 1989, and hoped that the increase would accelerate during the 1990s.

43. Her delegation further suggested that UNICEF's assistance to nutrition programmes all over the world should be strengthened, because experience showed that concentration on health care without an excellent nutrition programme would not reduce the infant mortality rate. India supported the idea of effective intersectoral co-ordination of UNICEF with WHO, UNESCO and UNFPA to ensure that there was no duplication of effort. UNICEF should not be expected to support on a large scale activities which fell strictly within the purview of other United Nations agencies; rather, it should limit itself to promoting the interests of children. UNICEF should also promote contacts between developing countries and funding agencies, particularly the banks, and it should consider changing its procurement policies, in order to help developing countries which, like India, were on the way to industrialization. In those countries, UNICEF, which had always paid great attention to recognizing national capabilities, might give price preference to local industry, without compromising the quality of products.

44. Mrs. Palme (Sweden), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

45. Mr. FORTIER (Canada) said that the tasks awaiting UNICEF in the 1990s were both immense and complex, despite the many triumphs of the 1980s in regard to child survival, protection and development and the raising of public consciousness on children's issues. There were many problems that affected the entire community of nations, such as the growing gap between the haves and the have nots, the rapid social and economic transformations taking place, the catastrophic effects of AIDS, the breakdown of the family, and the tragic waste of talent due to the lack of educational opportunities. Other problems, although not universal, were preventing many countries from realizing their full potential: malnutrition, unsanitary living conditions, infectious diseases, rapid urbanization and abandoned children, street children and children exploited as cheap labour. The means that were effective in remedying the situation were already known: grass-roots initiatives to influence national planning, strengthening existing health systems, strengthening community participation in decision-making, conversion of educational facilities into centres for village development, enhancing awareness through social communication and the transfer of information, promoting integrated approaches at the village level and cultivating the notion of local responsibility, as well as decentralization of activities.

46. Bearing those thoughts in mind, his delegation fully supported UNICEF's goals and strategies for children in the 1990s. It also strongly supported the country-programming process as the primary mechanism for developing feasible country-level goals, objectives and standards. It was important to resist the temptation to reorder well-founded national programmes solely to meet global targets. All country programmes should include a sustainability analysis directed towards programmes which in the long run could be supported through locally generated resources. For the 1990s, the focus should progress from hitting targets to sustaining impact.

47. Canada had supported the idea of holding a World Summit for Children from its inception. It was pleased with the work of the intergovernmental Planning Committee of the Summit, and viewed the establishment of Working Groups on the Declaration and on Format as important steps in facilitating progress in those areas. Canada looked forward to hearing the views of members of the Board on the preparations and, in particular, on the issues which should be addressed in the Declaration, and wished to reiterate its commitment to the goals and purposes of the Summit and to its fundamental premise of mobilizing the collective will for the benefit of children at the highest political level.

48. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and was proud to have played an active role in its elaboration; it was also delighted at the large number of States that had already signed the Convention. Canada strongly supported the call addressed to all States to accede to the Convention.

49. It was too early to evaluate the long-term impact of the World Conference on Education for All, given the current context of crippling international debt and economic restructuring in many developing countries. Basic education, like basic health, must be recognized as an essential economic investment that must be

(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

protected, and the pressing issue of education for women and girls must also be addressed. The integration of women in development was one of the corner-stones of Canadian development assistance policy, and his Government considered it particularly appropriate that UNICEF, given its mandate, should aim its programmes towards learning needs.

50. His delegation welcomed UNICEF's efforts to address the issue of maternal mortality in the developing world. It was as much to protect women's health as it was to contain population growth that Canada supported an even greater UNICEF role in family planning activities and greater progress in implementing UNICEF's overall policy on women, since the integration of women's concerns into programmes was still somewhat ad hoc, fragmented and unstructured.

51. No other organization did the job of sensitizing the world to the plight of children better than UNICEF. Canada wished to express its satisfaction with the evaluation of external relations. It looked forward to actions based on the evaluation which would clarify the complicated policy issues, improve the organizational structure and provide greater accountability to the Board. Lastly, he wished to reiterate that UNICEF had the support not only of his Government but also of the Canadian public as evidenced by the large voluntary contributions of time and money made through the National Committee for UNICEF.

52. Mrs. BOUKADOUM (Observer for Algeria) paid tribute to the ceaseless efforts of UNICEF to promote child survival, protection and development. Clear evidence of the great success of those efforts was the fact that, through measures co-ordinated with Governments, UNICEF saved 2 million children annually from illness, malnutrition and death. Nevertheless, in an era of significant technical progress such as the present, it was frustrating that millions of children in developing countries fell victim to illness and were uncertain of survival. That situation had worsened during the 1980s because of the world economic crisis and the structural adjustment measures adopted in response to it, which had caused serious damage to the balanced development of children. In the developing countries, 45 per cent of children under the age of five lived in poverty; moreover, Africa and Asia accounted for 12 million of the 14 million children who died annually from malnutrition or illness. Unless the current trend was reversed, by the end of the current decade, 100 million children in developing countries would have died prematurely. That situation represented a true human tragedy which threatened the principal resource of the human race: children. Efforts should be co-ordinated to improve child survival conditions and to put an end to the suffering of those who continued to live in poverty or to be subjected to conditions of war, violence and exploitation. In that connection, millions of children were suffering from oppression and racism, frequently at the cost of their lives, in Palestine, southern Africa and other regions of the world.

53. Aware of the gravity of the situation, many developing countries had accorded maximum priority in their health policies to safeguarding the lives and well-being of children with a view to protecting the health of children and mothers and promoting environmental sanitation. In that context, the achievement had been the

(Mrs. Boukadoum, Observer, Algeria)

Bamako Initiative which had resulted from a meeting of African Ministers of Health, held in 1987. In undertaking that enterprise, the developing countries had confirmed that an unfavourable international climate was hampering their efforts to promote child survival and development; her delegation therefore endorsed the Executive Director's recommendation that, in future efforts and activities, the highest priority should be accorded to meeting the needs of children.

54. In the area of health, Algeria had undertaken a series of activities designed to safeguard the health of children, youth and mothers, in accordance with the Plan of Action for Health launched in 1984. Those activities, closely co-ordinated with UNICEF, had as a priority goal the reduction of infant and maternal mortality through eight subprogrammes: reduction of mortality due to dehydration, immunization strategy, nutrition, child spacing, neonatal mortality, respiratory infections, environmental hygiene and social mobilization. The strategy had brought about an improvement in living conditions, in particular with respect to hygiene, nutrition and the awareness of the importance of child care at the family level. Also noteworthy were the administrative reforms in every sector of society, including health and social welfare, designed to achieve a better utilization of resources and to meet the needs of the population, especially children, to the fullest extent possible.

55. On the eve of the twenty-first century, the needs of children remained enormous, although the possibilities for action were much greater than before. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provided an ideal normative framework within which to apply the strategies and achieve the goals of child development. As one of the first signatories to the Convention, Algeria hoped that it would enter into force as soon as possible. Similarly, the holding of the World Summit for Children represented a milestone in the international community's efforts in favour of children. Algeria hoped to participate actively in that event and, to that end, had submitted general suggestions to the preparatory committee on themes and priorities which should be taken up at the Summit. It considered that the highest importance should be given to consideration of problems affecting the most vulnerable children and to the development of activities to resolve them.

56. Mr. SCHILLING (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the Board's session was taking place at a time when developments in Europe and elsewhere and changes in East-West relations gave rise to optimism for the future. Nevertheless, dedication and persistence were required to turn expectations into reality. In any event, the Federal Republic of Germany would maintain its resolve to contribute to the solution of problems which imposed a heavy burden on its partners and friends in the developing world.

57. As stated in the UNICEF medium-term plan for the period 1990-1993, the economic outlook for a number of countries raised serious concern, especially in the light of the consequences that those conditions could have for the well-being and survival of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society: women and children. The UNICEF goal of achieving adjustment and development "with a human face" therefore remained valid. To overcome the persistent problems of infant

(Mr. Schilling, Federal Republic of Germany)

mortality and child development world wide, UNICEF must continue its work wherever it was needed. It should therefore give careful and favourable consideration to formal requests put forward by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; at the same time, that positive attitude should not lead to a reduction in the commitment to children in the developing world.

58. The Government and people of the Federal Republic of Germany viewed with gratitude and admiration the dedication of the staff of UNICEF and its well-deserved reputation as an efficient humanitarian and development agency; its ceaseless work had brought it great popularity in his country. Through the untiring efforts of its thousands of voluntary workers, the National Committee for UNICEF had in 1989 collected more money from private sources than any other national committee.

59. He wished to encourage UNICEF and its Executive Director to continue to focus on the traditional sectors of activity, since establishing too many goals and priorities for the 1990s was liable to weaken efforts and dilute the impact of financial resources. The achievements of UNICEF in such fields as immunization and oral rehydration therapy were the best proof of the effectiveness of its work, yet some children had yet to benefit from the basic programmes of UNICEF, which should try to reach those children before moving to new areas of activity. His delegation agreed that complementary measures were needed to make basic education available to all children and it was glad to note that the share of the UNICEF budget earmarked for basic education was to be increased. It trusted that there would be greater co-ordination in that area with UNESCO and other relevant organizations.

60. The Federal Republic of Germany was also pleased to note the integration of young women and mothers into mainstream development programmes as it believed that birth control and family planning were prerequisites for sound development and for child survival strategies. His delegation therefore urged UNICEF to co-ordinate its projects with the activities of UNFPA and WHO. His Government also appreciated the efforts of UNICEF to co-operate closely with other agencies of the system such as UNDP, UNESCO, WHO, UNFPA and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) so as to avoid overlapping and to supplement its activities. He hoped that such collaboration would be extended to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), especially since the great majority of the refugees were women and children and UNHCR found itself in the most difficult financial crisis of its history.

61. Pursuant to a decision of the Executive Board, a comprehensive evaluation of the current external relations policies of UNICEF had been undertaken. The report on that evaluation constituted a solid basis for discussion of the issues in the relevant committee.

62. Despite doubts as to the cost-benefit ratio of the World Summit for Children, the Federal Republic of Germany hoped that it would achieve the ambitious

(Mr. Schilling, Federal Republic of Germany)

objectives envisaged by UNICEF and the initiators of the idea. Since many important questions concerning the goals, the topics and the format of the Summit still remained unanswered, his Government was not yet in a position to announce in what way it would participate. In that connection, his delegation considered that before a decision was taken on the revised budget for the Summit and the related mobilization activities, the Secretariat should produce a document which would meet all the concerns of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

63. In his delegation's view, all the public relations activities of UNICEF must remain subordinate to its main task, programme delivery in the field. The success achieved by UNICEF through its programmes would contribute more to its image and its public support than any public relations exercise.

64. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the decade of the 1990s had begun with unprecedented changes and opportunities, such as the bright prospects for East-West détente. Such opportunities must be seized. The adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been an important milestone. The preparations for the World Summit for Children were also moving forward briskly. It was, moreover, to be hoped that issues pertaining to the welfare of children would be appropriately reflected in the strategies and programmes for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. In contrast to those positive developments, the decade of the 1980s had seen an increase in poverty and the deterioration of the environment. The consequences could be disastrous unless a united effort was made to solve the outstanding problems during the new decade.

65. His country's association with UNICEF had been fruitful and UNICEF programmes offered hope for the attainment of a better future for millions of children and mothers. In that connection, his Government was committed to meeting the goal of universal child immunization by the mid-1990s as a leading element of the maternal and child health strategy. The expanded programme on immunization had been implemented in a phased manner starting with a few subdistricts in 1986. Currently supplies, logistics and trained personnel were available throughout the entire country and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus coverage had increased from less than 2 per cent in 1986 to 50 per cent by the end of 1989. The First Lady of Bangladesh, who had also participated in a programme against drug abuse, had given her active support. In order to strengthen primary health care still further, services in that area should be linked with family planning activities. It had also been demonstrated that the improvement in the survival rate of children through the involvement of parents contributed to a greater voluntary reduction in births. Although the number of primary schools had increased, there were not enough to accommodate the growing number of children of primary school age. Nevertheless, top-level political commitment to universal primary education was ensured by the recent announcement by the President and the subsequent enactment of a law concerning free and compulsory primary education. In order to meet the needs of working children who remained outside the reach of formal education, special schools had been set up, conveniently located near their working places. That system, which was to be extended to all districts of the country, would be

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

evaluated in the light of the overall needs of working children within the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

66. Other major UNICEF programme activities in Bangladesh focused on health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, the participation of women in development, and integrated basic services for the rural and urban poor. The Government of Bangladesh had granted three minutes of free broadcast time, both on radio and television, for the dissemination of messages on the health and welfare of children. A National Council of Mothers and Children had been set up in order to adopt coherent and effective measures for their welfare.

67. Experience with child survival and development activities in recent years had demonstrated that dramatic progress could be achieved in reducing child mortality and improving the health and well-being of children. However, the tragedy of infant mortality, morbidity and suffering continued and it was essential to maintain the momentum of those programmes. In that connection, his delegation supported the UNICEF goals for children and development in the 1990s. The experience of the 1980s had shown that the targets were achievable and that the means of achieving them were cost-effective and readily available. The forthcoming World Summit for Children could lead to a commitment at the highest political level to the goals and strategies for ensuring child survival, protection and development. The Summit would also provide an opportunity to consider important issues concerning the sustainability of various programmes even after the achievement of initial targets. Appropriate strategies and actions must be evolved for the development of the growing minds and bodies of children in order to ensure health and education for all. The Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All would be particularly relevant in connection with the World Summit for Children.

68. The President of Bangladesh had said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the single most important and comprehensive international agreement on the rights of the child and had expressed the hope that it would promote the welfare of children everywhere and in all circumstances. Bangladesh, which had been one of the first countries to sign the Convention, hoped that the World Summit for Children would accelerate the process of its ratification and implementation. In the context of the welfare of children, girl children deserved special attention and, in order to improve their overall status, the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation had declared 1990 the Year of the Girl Child. In Bangladesh, education for girl children up to junior high school was free. In addition, in one-child families, if the child was a girl education was free at all levels. The status of children could not be perceived in isolation from that of mothers, and it was therefore very important to improve the status of mothers too.

69. In view of the fact that effective solutions were available to the most important causes of illness, malnutrition and death among children, it was to be hoped that the World Summit for Children would result in a commitment by the world's leaders, increase the awareness of the people, and mobilize national resources to meet the goals and strategies for the welfare of children. It should

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

also stimulate new initiatives throughout the world to ensure the survival, protection and development of children as key elements in the socio-economic development of the developing countries. During the 1980s, the economic and social situation of the least developed countries had deteriorated and the most serious effects of structural adjustments had been felt by the most vulnerable, namely mothers and children. His delegation hoped that the World Summit for Children would give priority consideration to the needs and the vulnerability of the least developed countries and focus on specific programmes for the mothers and children of those countries. The deterioration of the situation of children in the developing countries should be seen in the context of the problems facing those countries. Their economic recovery would require intensified efforts by the international community. The political changes which were taking place in the world should surely release more resources to meet the urgent needs of the developing countries and put them on the road to sustainable development.

70. Miss Diéguez (Mexico) resumed the Chair.

71. Mrs. BEHRENS DE ANTIA (Uruguay) expressed her delegation's appreciation for the valuable efforts made by UNICEF and commended the Executive Director on the ability he had demonstrated in persuading the international community to give high priority to the interests of children in the overall development strategy. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children clearly testified to that ability. The World Summit for Children could create new ties of co-operation and solidarity to meet the challenge of ensuring the survival and development of children with a common defined strategy, supported by adequate resources, to undertake programmes and activities focusing on the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

72. The profound changes which were taking place in the world made it possible to envisage the establishment of a new international balance which could bring about a genuine strengthening of peace and, consequently, a renewal of the ties of solidarity and co-operation between all peoples. A climate of trust and mutual respect at the international level would make it possible to establish the bases for the redirection to socio-economic development of the abundant resources currently devoted to programmes consistent with earlier political realities.

73. The Latin American and Caribbean countries were overwhelmed by the complex problems they faced in overcoming the socio-economic crisis in the region. In Latin America as a whole, the per capita gross domestic product was lower today than at the beginning of the 1980s and at the start of the new decade there was a net export of capital. Despite the enormous payments made to service the external debt between 1980 and 1989, the debt had increased by more than $400,000 million. It had been necessary to apply macro-economic adjustment policies, the effects of which had been felt particularly severely by the most vulnerable population groups. In that connection, the UNICEF proposal for the application of policies of structural adjustment with a human face was particularly important. Despite national efforts, the social situation had deteriorated seriously and it was estimated that almost 40 per cent of the total population of the region was living in poverty. There were 80 million children under 16 years of age living in

(Mrs. Behrens de Antia, Uruguay)

conditions of poverty and more than 31 million in conditions of critical poverty. One of the positive factors which stimulated efforts to overcome backwardness and underdevelopment was the fact that for the first time all Governments in South America had been freely elected. Nevertheless, a genuine political democracy could only be sustained if economic growth and distributive justice were guaranteed. Investment in children was not only a matter of ethics, but was based on a strategic responsibility to break the chain of poverty passed from generation to generation.

74. In Uruguay, the total population had increased between 1963 and 1985 by only 9.8 per cent, while the population living in extreme poverty had increased by 300 per cent and those living in absolute povery by 264 per cent. Almost half of all Uruguayan children were born and lived in households which faced problems of food, security, overcrowding, water supply, health services, education and subsistence. In the past five years, the infant mortality rate had decreased significantly in Uruguay, from 30 to 20 per thousand live births. As a result of poverty, marginalization and malnutrition, infant mortality in public health institutions was four and a half times higher than in other types of health centres. There was an inverse relationship between the infant mortality rate and the educational level of the mothers. The mortality rate among children whose mothers had no education or had not finished school was 50 per thousand live births; the mortality rate among children of mothers with higher education was 10 per thousand live births. The State provided assistance to 35 per cent of the population, and 70 per cent of those people received food which partially met the nutritional needs of pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children, despite which almost 8 per cent of children were born with a low birth weight and 19 per cent with an inadequate birth weight. More than 70 per cent of children had no access to pre-school education, but, with the support of UNICEF and with resources from the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean, whose results were encouraging, it was to be hoped that there would be 145 day-care centres within the time-frame envisaged, as part of a programme to which Uruguay contributed $9 for every dollar of external co-operation received. Uruguay appreciated the continuing support it had received from the UNICEF Office for Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

75. The Government of Uruguay was engaged in strengthening programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances and street children and, as far as women were concerned, their rate of participation in the labour market in the past 20 years had risen by 17 per cent. Women headed 14 per cent of Uruguayan households and 26 per cent of the children were the children of single mothers. Lastly, if Uruguay was to regain its capacity for economic growth, it was essential to combat inflation and generate stable conditions to encourage investment. However, the costs of adjustment should not fall on the most vulnerable sectors and it was important to mitigate the severity of the impact of macro-economic measures on those sectors. It would also be extremely advisable to resort to non-traditional technologies of social intervention. The future of Uruguay did not, however, depend exclusively on a Government, but would be the result of joint action by society as a whole.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1990 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 17 April 1990, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:	Ms. PALME	(Sweden)
later:	Ms. DIEGEZ	(Mexico)

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General debate (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. BENEDIKTOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the work of the UNICEF Executive Board was now feeling the effects of the normalization of international relations. States that were slowly but surely moving from confrontation to détente and the settlement of regional military conflicts were becoming more and more aware that in order to solve increasingly complicated problems they must make every effort to reach a consensus reflecting their respective interests in an interdependent world.

2. The year 1990 could prove a turning-point for the world. One need only think of the International Development Strategy for the 1990s, the forthcoming World Summit for Children, the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation and the second Helsinki Conference scheduled for next autumn, which would provide opportunities for a joint examination of serious and urgent questions of international economic and humanitarian co-operation. It was therefore important to see to it that the special session and the International Development Strategy for the 1990s took into account the priorities for UNICEF in the 1990s and that UNICEF programmes were co-ordinated with those of other United Nations agencies. In that connection, his delegation supported UNICEF's appeal to make the welfare of children a primary concern and a decisive component of the International Development Strategy.

3. His delegation was on the whole satisfied with general developments in the activities of UNICEF in 1989, as summarized in the report of the Executive Director. It was pleased in particular with the progress made in the area of child survival, development and protection, and particularly the gains in immunization coverage and the increase in the number of children receiving oral rehydration therapy. Equally commendable were the programmes to control acute respiratory infections and AIDS, as well as the efforts to develop a strategy for improved nutrition.

4. He commended UNICEF on its participation in the preparations for and convening in Thailand of the World Conference on Education for All, which was to education what the 1978 Alma Ata conference had been to public health and primary health care, and said that UNICEF's decision to make the education programme one of its priorities for the 1990s was a sound one.

5. There were still many problems to be solved, however, particularly those linked to the long-term damaging effects of pollution and the degradation of the environment on child health.

6. Reference had already been made to the tumultuous events in the countries of Eastern Europe and the social and economic changes and difficulties those countries were experiencing, which also had an adverse impact on the situation of children. It was not UNICEF's task to analyse the causes of those difficulties, but some reflection about the causes would not be inappropriate. To its cost, and through

(Mr. Benediktov, USSR)

no fault of its own, the Soviet Union had lived for a long time in a besieged fortress surrounded by military bases and had allowed itself to get caught up in an arms race that placed a strain even on a great country. It had relied on its own strength and on the forbearance of a population that had accepted hardships and a low standard of living in order to safeguard world peace. In addition there had been serious errors of judgement and calculation by the Government and by planning bodies, which had tried to solve industrial and economic development problems at the expense of the social dimension - which had led to chronic inadequacies in the financing of the health-care, social security and educational systems - without, unfortunately, making any effort to compensate for the shortcomings of central planning by providing for self-regulating mechanisms in the economic and social spheres.

7. The people of the Soviet Union, and principally President Gorbachev, had been able to take a frank and honest look at themselves and at a world hurtling towards a nuclear catastrophe and self-destruction, and to take control of the process of reconstruction and to steer a course both domestically and in international relations of correcting the errors and seeking new solutions for the future. For the first time in 70 years, they had become fully aware of what international solidarity meant after the serious earthquake in Armenia. The Soviet Union could overcome its current difficulties, but it would do so more rapidly and effectively if it had the understanding and support of the United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF. The assistance it required was not financial but rather in the form of know-how, experience and a collective effort to deal with the problems.

8. In the Soviet Union, the protection of maternal and child health raised serious problems whose solution had two basic aspects. First of all, there was the need to overcome the extraordinary situations that had been caused by an ecological disaster of global magnitude, namely, the drying up of the Aral Sea, which was the result of mistakes made in pursuing the land irrigation strategy in several regions of Central Asia. He also cited the tragic effects of the accident at Chernobyl, which could and must serve as a warning to other countries that used nuclear energy. In both cases, lasting and still not sufficiently assessed harm had been done to child health.

9. Secondly, the Soviet people wondered how to prevent the economic changes that were in the offing from having serious effects on the health, nutrition and education of children. In many parts of the country, infant mortality was still intolerably high. Much remained to be done to rehabilitate hundreds of thousands of disabled children and children with physical, mental and psychological handicaps, and many children had AIDS. There were more than a million orphans and children separated from their parents in the Soviet Union, and juvenile delinquency was on the rise.

10. The new President of the Soviet Union, Mr. Gorbachev, had reflected the concern of the country's leadership in the first documents he signed, namely, the decree of the President of the USSR of 7 April on measures for the assistance of the children of Chernobyl and the message to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR

(Mr. Benediktov, USSR)

proposing the immediate consideration of emergency measures to improve the situation of women and the protection of maternal and child health.

11. His delegation was gratified that UNICEF was trying in difficult circumstances to take care of all the world's children, and believed that new methods must be found to help children wherever they might be, without violating UNICEF's mandate, which was to give priority to helping children in the developing countries. It felt that in some respects the strategies for children in the 1990s were in need of improvement if the World Summit for Children was to live up to the hopes placed in it. As for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, he recalled that the Soviet Union had taken an active part in its preparation and had been one of the first countries to sign it. The Convention had been submitted to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for ratification.

12. Mr. KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda) said that he appreciated the pragmatism and foresight UNICEF had shown in improving the quality of life of children and their families, and especially those living in particularly difficult circumstances, such as apartheid. In that connection, Uganda supported UNICEF's proposal to develop ways of co-operating with selected non-governmental organizations in South Africa to promote awareness of the situation of children in that country.

13. His delegation commended the way the various reports before the Executive Board described the plan of action for the 1990s for child survival and development, an area in which UNICEF had demonstrated its ability rapidly to identify situations that could endanger the survival and development of children.

14. As UNICEF entered the new decade, it needed to be aware that the success of its future programmes depended upon how it used the experience it had gained in the 1980s. To be specific, one must ask what factors would have a positive or a negative impact on the situation of children during the coming decade and find means of solving the problems effectively. That was the only way to ensure the short-term success and long-term sustainability of programmes. In the case of Africa, for example, one must consider the impact in the decade ahead of the deterioration of the economic situation, the persistence of ethnic conflicts and the degradation of the environment.

15. It was fitting that the decade was starting with the World Summit for Children, which would provide the opportunity to secure the commitment of the highest political leaders to ensuring that the goals and strategies for child survival, protection and development could be translated into positive action. As a member of the Executive Board, Uganda approved the revised budgets for the World Summit and for the related mobilization activities, which fell within the parameters set by the Executive Board at its special session in December 1989. His delegation endorsed the development goals and strategies for children in the 1990s and the priorities for UNICEF action set out in document E/ICEF/1990/L.5 and it also shared the view that the specific goals and strategies for child survival, protection and development by the year 2000 should be the focus of the UNICEF contribution to the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, and that, within that overall framework, the priorities for action by UNICEF must be identified within

(Mr. Kamunanwire, Uganda)

the country programme approach, with emphasis on enhancing human capabilities and meeting basic human needs. The basic services concept as developed by UNICEF and WHO in the early 1970s was still relevant today. Basic health-care services, basic education, water supply and sanitation were crucial to the promotion of child survival and the development programmes, and his delegation welcomed the fact that UNICEF had continued to acknowledge their urgency. The Bamako Initiative was a realistic attempt to promote cost-effective primary health care with the full participation of the community. The training of community health workers strengthened the linkage between maternal and child health and child survival, protection and development programmes.

16. Long before the Alma Ata Declaration, Uganda had started a primary health care pilot project. In keeping with the Bamako spirit, the Ugandan Government was in the process of introducing cost-sharing in the provision of health services. It hoped thereby to raise resources to provide incentives to health workers and to rehabilitate and maintain deteriorated facilities. The measure would also help to ensure the sustainability of the programmes financed by UNICEF and by other agencies.

17. UNICEF, in conjunction with the World Health Organization and other agencies, should intensify its participation in AIDS-control programmes and participate in the implementation of projects to assist children orphaned by AIDS, while pursuing its efforts to reduce the traditional causes of child mortality.

18. Programme delivery depended upon good social and political organization at all levels. Uganda's experience had demonstrated that a high degree of political will and social organization facilitated the delivery of services even when income levels were low. UNICEF and the other agencies would do well in that connection to make full use of the existing administrative structure.

19. His delegation hoped that many projects in the medium-term plan would ensure full community participation because his Government was trying to go beyond creating awareness to actual community involvement in the projects from their conception to their implementation in order to ensure their success. The success of a project was also linked to its sustainability, and his delegation was pleased to note that the country programme for Uganda for 1990-1995 stressed that concept, even though much remained to be done in that area.

20. He would like to see greater emphasis given to programme delivery while reducing programme support costs. There should also be a more integrated approach in UNICEF-supported programmes. For instance, the provision of safe water alone would not significantly reduce the incidence of child diarrhoea without accompanying improvements in sanitation and expanded health education. Such an integrated approach required continued inter-agency collaboration. In that respect, there should be more collaboration between UNICEF and UNFPA in the area of integrating population variables in development planning. UNICEF should support population programmes, including family planning and the integration of women in development.

(Mr. Kamunanwire, Uganda)

21. There was also a need to set up a mechanism for the systematic and regular monitoring and evaluation of programmes to ensure that programmes were carried out as planned and within the permissible resources.

22. He thanked UNICEF for the effective support it had provided to the child survival programme in Uganda, and particularly to the Uganda National Expanded Programme of Immunization. Immunization coverage had risen from 4 per cent in 1986 to over 50 per cent in 1989, and had led to a decline in the incidence of the six childhood diseases covered. Oral rehydration therapy and health education had also reduced the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases. The provision of safe drinking water and the training of health educators, as well as the school health programme had also had a remarkable impact on the public health-care system.

23. Mr. TORNUDD (Finland) said that even though the political changes taking place in many parts of the world had given rise to expectations of rapid economic and social progress, the fact remained that the basic needs of the majority of the world's population, especially children, had still not been met and that the situation of the developing countries was still a cause of great concern. Faced with those problems, the international community, aware of the increased interdependence of the world, was actively trying to promote solutions within a comprehensive perspective. In that context, the Executive Board was trying to establish guidelines that would enable UNICEF to translate its experience and know-how into sustainable action within the framework of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations Development Decade.

24. In order to ensure permanent health and welfare services for children, UNICEF's advocacy and assistance to Governments was of vital importance. UNICEF should in particular actively promote family planning programmes in close co-operation with the United Nations Population Fund and other competent agencies.

25. In the context of the economic reforms under way in many developing countries, UNICEF had played an important role by drawing attention to the social costs of structural adjustment and had contributed to the formulation of policies geared to the need for adjustment with a human face.

26. UNICEF strategy and programmes must help establish national plans designed to promote accelerated growth and sustainable development. In other words, there must be a constant interplay between action for child welfare and overall national development. There must be a true partnership for development between communities, government authorities at all levels and UNICEF. For that purpose, the country programming approach must be improved and fully utilized so as to reduce the tendency to concentrate on short-term goals and specific activities in order to focus on sustainable, all-round, long-term development.

27. His delegation had noted with concern the constant increase in UNICEF activities financed through supplementary funding. Finland, whose policy was to contribute substantially to the regular programme, and whose contribution for the current year was 140 million markkaa, or approximately $US 33 million, felt that the Board was best qualified to see to it that the basic principles underlying

(Mr. Tornudd, Finland)

UNICEF action were respected and that the best use was made of the funds. In his delegation's view, the Board should take a closer look at UNICEF's funding policy.

28. The World Summit for Children offered the leaders of the entire world an opportunity to support the cause of children. The Summit would highlight the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which should be ratified by Governments as soon as possible. It was therefore disturbing to note how little progress had been made so far in the preparations for the event. His delegation would therefore like to see the outstanding issues settled quickly so as not to jeopardize the goals of the Summit and to provide Governments with the information they needed to decide on their participation.

29. Mr. MATELJAK (Yugoslavia) said that the fate of children was basically determined by their countries' level of socio-economic and cultural development. While the international political situation had improved further since the previous session of the Executive Board, particularly in the direction of general political democratization, only the industrialized countries had achieved positive results in the area of economic development while the situation in the developing countries had deteriorated. Such developments seriously affected children and mothers. It was therefore necessary to remove the barriers to the social and economic development of the developing countries, namely, the external debt burden, restrictive measures against their exports and falling prices for their export products.

30. It was also necessary to work for the benefit of children in the developed countries, for their situation was deteriorating despite economic progress. Children in those countries were especially exposed to the dangers of drug abuse and to the effects of an unhealthy environment. There was also a constant practice of violating the rights of children, even for political purposes. All those factors highlighted the importance of UNICEF's role in protecting children.

31. His Government supported UNICEF's activities and plans for future action as described in the report of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1990/2), the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1993 (E/ICEF/1990/3) and the document on UNICEF's external relations (E/ICEF/1990/L.4). Three events were particularly relevant to the interests of children: the decision to hold the World Summit for Children in September 1990, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All at the Jomtien Conference. Everything possible must be done to ensure the success of the World Summit and particularly to secure the necessary funds. His Government would soon be taking a decision on its contribution to the Summit. The World Declaration on Education for All must not remain a dead letter, which meant that Governments must exert maximum efforts in mobilizing the necessary human and material resources but that the United Nations and international financial agencies must also provide adequate financial and technical assistance.

32. The Convention on the Rights of the Child must be ratified quickly. His Government had started the ratification procedure and hoped to finalize it before

(Mr. Mateljak, Yugoslavia)

the World Summit. The fourth United Nations development decade would be of crucial importance for implementing the aforementioned documents and for radically improving the situation of the world's children. The interests of children must therefore be included in the priorities of the international development strategy for the fourth decade. However, General Assembly resolution 44/169 made no mention of children in its outline for the strategy.

33. The fate of Yugoslav children was inseparable from the fate of the country as a whole. Yugoslavia was currently undergoing a period of radical political and economic reform in the direction of a general democratization of society. The country was moving towards a market economy and the dinar was now a fully convertible currency. Despite those initial successes, however, stagnation of production and a rapid increase in unemployment meant that three or four more years of difficulties could be expected. To mitigate them, programmes of assistance to the most seriously affected groups had been adopted. At the same time, humanitarian organizations and economic enterprises were trying to help those in need. While his Government went along with the recent suggestion by the Executive Director regarding children in Eastern Europe, it believed that UNICEF action on behalf of that region must not be at the expense of non-alignment.

34. Mr. SIMMONS (Barbados) said that the survival rates of children had improved substantially in the Caribbean region over the past four decades, but that in the 1990s old problems were taking on new dimensions. Substance abuse was an old problem in Caribbean society that had developed new branches. The connection between drugs and AIDS was particularly devastating in view of its contribution to the indiscriminate spread of the disease. Another equally pernicious problem was the question of violence, much of it directed against children. In a developing society such as Barbados, it was believed that the breakup of the extended family structure had contributed to many societal ills. The nurturing and caring that relatives willingly bestowed had to a large extent disappeared. The Government of Barbados had sought to establish structures that would address those issues.

35. He paid tribute to the excellent work being done by UNICEF staff in Barbados, who had continually offered support to the country's Child Care Board. National action required further strengthening through legislative measures based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Barbados was to sign shortly and whose ratification it was actively considering. Because the situation of children could not be viewed in isolation from that of mothers, everything must be done to implement the various recommendations on the integration of women in development, particularly those contained in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Women must participate in the life of society as legally independent agents and must be empowered with the necessary knowledge and resources. Education was the basic tool for enhancing the status of women. Women's education was important not only for the general welfare of society but also because of its close link to child survival and child spacing. Men must also be encouraged to assume greater responsibility in the upbringing of children and the maintenance of the household. Like many developing countries, Barbados was a matriarchal society in which single-parent households predominated: hence the continuing importance of educaition for all.

(Mr. Simmons, Barbados)

While progress had been made in primary education, greater attention must be paid to pre-school and non-formal education, both of which were of enormous importance for very young children.

36. The foundations of basic education could be laid in the home and the community in a low-cost yet effective manner, respecting peoples' different cultures and lifestyles. Early childhood was in fact the optimum time for preventive work which could save a lifetime of remedial efforts. That must be borne in mind in any UNICEF initiatives with regard to the environment: because children would inherit the future, environmental awareness must be increased.

37. His Government, like many others, was concerned about the high level of adolescent pregnancy and unemployment among young people. A training programme had been instituted for young people who were about to leave school; it was hoped that by inculcating positive attitudes it would be possible to arrest the drift towards delinquency.

38. UNICEF must continue to draw attention to the problems of children that were common to both developing and developed countries and to programmes that appeared to be effective in addressing them. He commended UNICEF for shifting towards a more catalytic role by placing emphasis, through its country programmes, on the conditions necessary for the promotion of self-reliance. Lastly, his Government fully supported the initiative of organizing a World Summit for Children.

39. Mr. SANG YONG PARK (Observer for the Republic of Korea) said that the current session of the UNICEF Executive Board was being held against the backdrop of dramatic changes in international relations and heightened expectations for the role of the United Nations system as a whole. It was encouraging to see that UNICEF's performance had been relatively strong in several areas of child survival and development. If the universal child immunization goal of 80 per cent by the end of 1990 was achieved, more than 3 million infant and child deaths could be prevented annually.

40. UNICEF must give continued priority to the basic areas and poorest regions. His delegation welcomed the fact that the largest share of programme resources had been devoted to the health area and to the regions of Africa and Asia. It also welcomed the growing emphasis on relatively new areas, such as environment and development with a human face. However, it was concerned at the steady decline in the share of programme expenditures allocated to education. Economic difficulties in the developing world had created crises in basic education and some 100 million children had no access to education. Since his country's rapid economic development had been made possible by a high investment in education, his delegation emphasized the importance of UNICEF education programmes. He congratulated UNICEF on the success of the World Conference on Education for All which it, together with other agencies, had organized in Thailand in March 1990. It was now up to countries to implement the results fully.

(Mr. Sang Yong Park, Observer, Republic of Korea)

41. The achievements of UNICEF in external relations deserved special attention. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly, the World Summit for Children and the State of the World's Children report would continue to focus more attention on major issues affecting children.

42. Another area to which his Government attached great importance was inter-agency collaboration among UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO and other United Nations organs, as well as member Governments and non-governmental organizations. It also endorsed the general thrust of UNICEF's strategies and its medium-term plan for the period 1990-1993. The Fourth Development Decade should include fulfilment of the rights of children among its highest priorities. The World Summit for Children was a positive initiative, and his Government would make an effort to contribute to its success.

43. UNICEF had established relations with the Republic of Korea for the first time in 1950. UNICEF assistance to Korea had been transformed from emergency relief operations and emphasis on social development into programme-specific assistance. Currently, priority was being given to advocacy and fund-raising activities. His Government would continue to give priority to social problems in the context of its seventh five-year economic and social development plan, which was in line with the "development with a human face" approach taken by UNICEF. It would also take all necessary measures in order to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child before the World Summit, and to ratify it before the end of 1990.

44. Mrs. Dieguez (Mexico) took the Chair.

45. Ms. ZINDOGA (Zimbabwe), recalling that OAU had declared 1990 as the Year of the African Child, said that Africa was the only continent where the number of deaths of children was rising rather than decreasing. Africa had not been able to break the cycle of poverty that had affected generation after generation. The southern Africa region was gripped by poverty not only because of natural disasters, such as droughts and floods, but also because of the policies of apartheid practised by the South African régime. Children, in particular, were victims of that policy. Those born white were generally well fed, better educated and tended to live longer lives. It was sad that in affluent South Africa, the conditions of black children were the worst in the region. The infant mortality rate was 120 deaths per 1,000 births for blacks, as compared with 12 deaths per 1,000 births for whites. Children were victims not only of physical violence but also of structural violence. Children were detained and tortured by the security forces. Diseases such as tuberculosis, gastroenteritis and measles were exacerbated by poor health and sanitary facilities, and were common causes of death among black children. Elsewhere in the region, the scourge of apartheid and constant destabilization activities from South Africa had diverted resources from child-oriented development programmes to defence and other national proctective measures. Mozambique and Angola had been seriously affected by those activities of destabilization and banditry. There also, most of the victims were young children.

(Ms. Zindoga, Zimbabwe)

46. The problems of child survival in the region were being compounded by the existence of 12 million refugees and displaced persons from Mozambique and Angola, who found refuge in the neighbouring countries, whose health and education facilities were already overstretched. Namibia had recently attained independence, and her delegation wished to pay special tribute to UNICEF and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for completing the project of repatriating Namibian refugees, among whom many women and children were to be found. The situation of the Namibian children posed complex challenges because 400,000 persons had to be relocated.

47. It was important to point out that the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners - which her Government welcomed - had not helped to remove the fundamental structures of apartheid, and that the international community was obliged to continue its efforts to alleviate the suffering of children under apartheid. UNICEF was co-operating with non-governmental organizations designated by the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress inside South Africa; her delegation supported that approach as long as UNICEF did not hold a dialogue with the apartheid régime and did not violate the sanctions imposed by the United Nations. UNICEF could help lay the groundwork for good relations with the future people's Government of South Africa, as had been the case in Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe when they had acceded to independence.

48. The combination of war and poverty had led to extraordinary suffering in the region. The Government of Zimbabwe called for the imposition of comprehensive mandatory economic sanctions against the apartheid régime, in order to bring a speedy end to the suffering of the children of southern Africa. Her delegation also appealed for financial, material and moral support to the countries of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference. Zimbabwe had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child; however, the front-line States had entered some reservations, as there was no reference in the Convention to children living under the apartheid régime. President Mugabe had been one of the first leaders to endorse the organization of the World Summit for Children, and Zimbabwe hoped that the issue of children under apartheid would be given full consideration. The Bamako Initiative had destroyed the popular myth in the Western media that Africa was always ready to beg for a bowl of rice. On the contrary, the Conference held at Arusha in February had demonstrated the willingness and readiness of the African people to involve themselves effectively in an action that served the interests of all and to contribute to an equitable development process that would ensure the survival and protection of children. Finally, her delegation congratulated Professor Olikoye Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria, as the recipient of the UNICEF Maurice Pate award.

49. Mr. SEMUKHA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the report of the Director-General of UNICEF covered an impressive range of concerns and hopes, of challenges and possibilities for the last decade of the twentieth century. In spite of all the hopes aroused by the fundamental transformations which the world was undergoing, it was impossible to remain silent about the injustices which still affected the lives of millions of people, and especially of children. Children first: that new ethic was entirely in line with the aspirations of the people and

(Mr. Semukha, Byelorussian SSR)

Government of Byelorussia. The forthcoming World Summit for Children would serve as a reminder that all political leaders should concentrate on the effect which a wide range of serious world problems - war and violence, poverty, indebtedness, environmental deterioration and drug abuse - had on the situation of children. The United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Children's Fund, had received a mandate to organize international co-operation on behalf of all children in the world.

50. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, recently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, should become the legal foundation for all joint activities undertaken on behalf of children, especially those carried out within the framework of UNICEF. The Byelorussian SSR had signed the Convention and was preparing to ratify it.

51. With regard to the strategy for child survival and development, his delegation noted that immunization coverage was continuing to expand, and that 42 countries had attained universal child immunization goals in December 1989.

52. As for development goals and strategies for children during the 1990s, his delegation supported the appeal to the international community to make the well-being of children the starting point of an international development strategy which was being developed by the United Nations.

53. The document on those issues should have dealt at greater length on the situation of children in certain developed countries, especially in the Eastern European region, where the recent economic and social transformations associated with the transition to a market economy and the change in policies concerning the social expenditures of States had complicated the situation. UNICEF should study ways and means, even non-traditional ones, for assisting those countries without violating its mandate to give priority to aiding developing countries. In that regard, the document in question should place greater emphasis on the spirit and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its universal orientation. His delegation nevertheless endorsed the recommendations contained in the document.

54. He drew the attention of the members of the Executive Board, and through them the entire international community, to the grave situation of children in the Byelorussian SSR. According to expert opinion, the accident which had occurred in the Chernobyl power station reactor on 26 April 1986 had discharged into the atmosphere a quantity of radioactive substances 90 times greater than that released by the explosion of the atom bomb over Hiroshima. A sizeable area of Byelorussia, the Ukraine and the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, as well as a number of neighbouring countries, had been contaminated. The Governments of the Soviet Union and of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian Republics had immediately embarked on a study of the accident and on the elimination of its consequences. There was now a better understanding of the extent of the disaster: as far as Byelorussia itself was concerned, the contamination was spread over 70 per cent of the whole area of the European part of the USSR stricken by the accident. In the contaminated area

(Mr. Semukha, Byelorussian SSR)

there were 2,200,000 inhabitants, 800,000 of whom were children. The Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic had lost almost 20 per cent of its farmland and nearly 15 per cent of its forests. Dozens of localities had been evacuated, and contaminated areas were still being discovered. In spite of the extent of the decontamination work already done, the situation continued to cause concern. Some 173,000 people were under medical surveillance, 37,000 of them children. There had been an increase in ailments of the respiratory tract and the thyroid gland, oncological diseases and various forms of leukaemia.

55. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR had decided to declare 26 April "Day of the Chernobyl Tragedy" as a reminder that support must continue to be given to those who had suffered the consequences of the accident. On 20 April 1990 the Presidium and Council of Ministers of the Byelorussian SSR had launched an appeal to parliaments, Governments, international organizations and all people of good will to help Byelorussia eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. His delegation also requested the Executive Board and secretariat of UNICEF to give all possible assistance to the Byelorussian people and the Government of the Byelorussian SSR in order to save the lives and protect the health of children in particularly difficult ecological conditions.

56. Mr. NOTERDAEME (Belgium) welcomed the progress made since the previous regular session of the Board, with the advance towards democracy in Eastern Europe and Latin America, the independence of Namibia and the establishment of a climate of international co-operation. He reassured the developing countries that Belgium had no intention of redirecting its development co-operation budgets towards intra-European assistance or co-operation projects. Furthermore, Belgium hoped that the improvement in the international climate would eventually enable funds hitherto allocated for military purposes to be released for development aid, and that the developing countries themselves would reduce their spending on armaments.

57. Belgium, which had been one of the first signatories, welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and reaffirmed that the rights of the child, although specific, could not be isolated from human rights. The child had the same basic rights as all other human beings and must be able to enjoy them in a world free from war and poverty and in an environment preserving the great ecological balances and the quality of life.

58. In the context of adjustment with a human face, Belgium encouraged UNICEF to continue the dialogue with the partners concerned, particularly with a view to reducing the debt and transforming it into resources for the benefit of the most vulnerable sectors of the population, foremost among them the children.

59. Belgium unreservedly approved the medium-term plan and, in particular, welcomed the emphasis placed on education and the increased attention given to child and female nutrition. It regarded birth spacing and family planning as other factors which were important for mother and child health. It also attached great importance to programme and project evaluation. In that connection it noted the excellent study on external relations, but regretted the rather over-general response which the secretariat had given it.

(Mr. Noterdaeme, Belgium)

60. Belgium would like the Director-General of UNICEF, when implementing decision 1989/8, "Reaching the poorest", to provide further information on his actions and intentions for the future in terms of locating the poorest sectors of the population in all countries, determining why they remained cut off from development, and seeking the means for bringing about their participation in development. Universalized programmes would not suffice even though some of them eventually reached the poorest; specific measures must be planned and well-aimed efforts made with the co-operation not only of Governments but also of non-governmental organizations associated with the poorest.

61. Following the compromise reached concerning the method of preparing the World Summit for Children, which ensured that the Summit would have the intellectual and technical support of the secretariat and guaranteed that the Executive Board would be able to play its proper role, his delegation expressed the hope that, apart from any politicization, the Summit would reinforce the specific actions taken by all countries and UNICEF to solve the most glaring problems faced by children, among them the economic and social exploitation of millions of children compelled to work in inhuman conditions, and the problem of children abandoned following the breakup of social and family ties.

62. Belgium was anxious to enable all countries both large and small to participate in decision-making as full members in United Nations agencies, and would not be seeking renewal of its term of office in the Executive Board of UNICEF. But it would continue to follow and support UNICEF's irreplaceable action in the service of development.

63. Mrs. WARD (Liberia) said that the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Conference on Education for All and the World Summit for Children, scheduled to take place at the highest political level, bore witness to a more humane conception of development and a heightened concern for the welfare of children. Recent political and social changes were also grounds for optimism, and the economic expansion from which the industrialized countries had benefited in recent years offered some hope for an increase in the funds allocated to the integration of women in development and to children.

64. The disastrous situation of mothers and children in sub-Saharan Africa was well known. Infant and under-five mortality rates in some African countries were among the highest in the world, and would probably reach 40 per cent by the end of the century. The statistics on AIDS were also particularly alarming. The malnutrition of children of poor families in urban and rural areas continued to increase, and it was estimated that 40 per cent of women of child-bearing age and 63 per cent of pregnant women were suffering from malnutrition. In addition there was continued degradation of the environment, resulting in particular from fuel requirements. That brief outline of the situation highlighted the urgent need to devote particular attention to Africa.

(Mrs. Ward, Liberia)

65. The Bamako Initiative to revitalize primary health care should be regarded as an integral part of any strategy for African children in the 1990s. It gave the population the opportunity to participate in the management of health services and could, if correctly financed, enable primary health care to be provided.

66. In order to succeed, any strategy on behalf of children in the 1990s should be based on the political will to take joint action in order to place the optimization of human resources at the centre of development strategies and enable women and young people to play an active role in a society in a process of transformation.

67. The World Summit for Children would provide the international community with an opportunity to subscribe to the development strategy on behalf of children for the 1990s and would give a much-needed impetus to implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Liberia would sign and ratify the Convention before the Summit was held.

68. Her Government sought to provide health services for Liberia's population under a rational system for providing curative and preventive care. Immunization had been given a high priority, and it was hoped that the fifth national immunization campaign would significantly improve the children's coverage by the year 1993.

69. Her Government was putting the final touches to a five-year health plan. Emphasis was placed on activities at county level, the decentralization and viability of services, social mobilization, establishing a system of management for primary health care, improvement in maternal and child health services and the provision of essential medicines. In order to ensure the provision of essential medicines, Liberia had adopted a two-part system of financing which comprised payment for services and the establishment of a renewable fund for medicines.

70. One of the principal goals in the area of education was to ensure that all children received at least 11 years of basic education. Under the law, education was compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 16. In primary education, the objective was to improve the quality of instruction, to expand access in such a way as to ensure regional and gender equity and to enhance the administrative and supervisory capability of the Ministry of Education. To that end, the Ministry of Education had developed a five-year plan (1990-1995) which stressed co-ordination among donor agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development, UNICEF and the World Bank. The World Conference on Education for All had highlighted the importance and the impact of basic education in national development. It had also developed a framework of action to meet the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults. The Government was planning an education month to sensitize the population.

71. The Government was making every effort to provide safe drinking water and was concentrating its activities on water inventory, hand-pump maintenance and repairs, community participation and the installation of pumps.

(Mrs. Ward, Liberia)

72. In conclusion, she congratulated Mr. Ransome-Kuti, Minister of Health of Nigeria, the latest recipient of the UNICEF Maurice Pate Award.

73. Mr. DING Yuanhong (China) said that his delegation had carefully studied the Executive Director's report (E/ICEF/1990/2) and also the report "The State of the World's Children 1990" and endorsed the strategies put forward therein. China supported efforts aimed at extending immunization coverage and was gratified to see that such coverage for children in developing countries had increased from 10 per cent in 1980 to 70 per cent in 1990. It was also encouraging to note that oral rehydration therapy, which had been barely known to people outside the scientific community in the early 1980s, was currently used by one third of the families in developing countries. Such achievements were testimony to the important contribution made by UNICEF to child welfare throughout the world.

74. Unfortunately, the report had also drawn attention to the adverse impact that the deteriorating world economic situation was having on child survival and development. Due to serious economic problems, the developing countries had been obliged to reduce further the resources allocated to education, nutrition, health and immunization. In some developing countries, the admission rate to primary schools was declining as were basic literacy programmes for adults and out-of-school young people. The coverage of vaccination for measles and tetanus remained quite low. That situation resulted mainly from the heavy burden of external indebtedness and the irrational international economic relations which had caused the developing countries to suffer heavy losses. Poverty continued to increase and the international community must follow the issue closely and find appropriate solutions. China supported the efforts of developing countries to develop their national economies, improve the global economic environment and establish the new international economic order which would help them step by step to create conditions to meet the basic needs of their people for nutrition, drinking water, primary health care, housing and education.

75. The Convention on the Rights of the Child would become an important legal document for the international protection of children. China had participated actively in drafting the Convention and would continue to work for its implementation. The departments concerned in his Government were actively studying matters relating to its signature and ratification.

76. The World Summit for Children would further heighten the international community's awareness of the issues of child survival, development and protection in the 1990s.

77. 1989 had been the last year of the third cycle of the UNICEF-China co-operation programme. Through the concerted efforts of both parties, all the projects of the programme had been completed and all the objectives had been achieved. In close co-operation with UNICEF, the departments concerned of his Government had done a great deal of preparatory work for the implementation of the fourth cycle co-operation programme. The Government had already allocated funds and appointed the necessary personnel. The new programme included projects on

(Mr. Ding Yuanhong, China)

health care, nutrition, basic education, the integration of women in development and child development. Over the past 40 years, the enrolment rate of school-age children had risen from 20 per cent to 97 per cent while illiteracy had dropped from 80 per cent to 20 per cent. It was planned that compulsory education for nine years would apply throughout the whole country by the year 2000. Nevertheless there were still more than 200 million illiterate people in China and the number was increasing, in particular because of a high drop-out rate among girls. Although China was facing financial difficulties, the Government had nevertheless decided to continue increasing funds for education as a matter of high priority. At the same time, the Government was endeavouring to mobilize the whole society to raise funds for schools and for improving teaching facilities. In connection with immunization, China had reached the target of 85 per cent coverage at provincial level at the end of 1988. Notwithstanding the many problems and difficulties in regard to the promotion of child survival and development, China was sure that, through the concerted efforts of Governments, the support of international organizations and assistance from NGOs, the goals set forth in the strategies for children in the 1990s would be realized.

78. Mr. TEELEY (United States of America) said that because of the increased financial contributions it was receiving UNICEF must make wise choices to ensure that these resources would benefit children in terms of sustainable programmes, particularly in respect of immunization coverage. UNICEF must establish priorities based on the needs of the various countries and the lessons of its own experience. The United States considered that the continued priority accorded to Africa in UNICEF's programmes and activities was appropriate. It also endorsed the strategy of focusing on primary activities (health, nutrition, water and sanitation and basic education) set out in the document on development goals and strategies: priorities for UNICEF action in the 1990s (E/ICEF/1990/L.5).

79. In eastern Europe where, during the current transitional period, certain groups of women and children were extremely vulnerable, UNICEF might profitably share with the new Governments its experience and expertise in managing emergencies and in procurement. It would appear that UNICEF could provide such assistance without any reduction in its regular programme activities or cost to the regular budget.

80. With reference to document E/ICEF/1990/L.5, the United States continued to believe that it was only at the country level taking account of needs, priorities, costs and resources, that specific goals and targets could be determined for the fight against certain diseases. It also agreed with UNICEF that the monitoring of programme implementation and evaluation of programme impact were of vital importance.

81. The United States welcomed the emphasis placed by UNICEF on the needs of girl children (E/ICEF/1990/L.1) but believed that a broader and more integrated approach must be taken to the issue of women in development. In that connection, it would be interested in being advised of the lessons learned from the recent evaluation of the subregional project for the Americas.

(Mr. Teeley, United States)

82. Under General Assembly resolution 44/211, UNICEF was required to strengthen its collaboration with other United Nations agencies. Thought might be given to the creation of a country-level framework for co-operation. Efforts must be made to improve co-operation at the field level. The United States would also encourage greater co-operation between UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It would also encourage UNICEF to share its experience on project decentralization and technical co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme and other specialized agencies.

83. The external relations activities of UNICEF were valuable as a mechanism for information, education and fund-raising. However, they consumed 20 per cent of total UNICEF resources and there was accordingly a need to establish priorities, so as to ensure that those activities were integrated with, and supported, programmes and also to build an evaluation plan into all such activities.

84. In the 1990s, UNICEF must continue its long-term administrative and financial planning, so as to provide support for programme activities. UNICEF's increased resources and the size and complexity of its field programmes called for changes in the Executive Board's methods and procedures so as to enhance the Board's effectiveness in providing guidance and oversight for the various activities.

85. Among the many activities undertaken in 1989, his delegation wished to highlight "Operation Lifeline Sudan", the preparations for the World Conference on Education for All, which had taken place just recently, and the preparations for the World Summit for Children, which would be held in 1990 in conjunction with a social mobilization campaign.

86. His delegation wished to pay tribute to the work of the private sector and especially the UNICEF National Committees.

87. Mrs. ABDALLA (Sudan) said that the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the forthcoming World Summit for Children demonstrated the ever-growing interest in the issue of children. The emphasis placed by the World Conference on Education for All, which had recently taken place in Thailand, on the education of young girls was significant: as future mothers, they would be aware of the importance of having their children immunized, giving them a balanced diet and teaching them proper hygiene.

88. With respect to eastern Europe, she hoped that current developments in that area would help to defuse tension in the world and open new horizons for international co-operation. However, assistance to the eastern countries should not be provided at the expense of the developing countries. Maintaining UNICEF assistance, particularly in the areas of immunization and control of diarrhoeal diseases, was particularly important since it contributed significantly to lowering infant mortality rates in developing countries.

(Mrs. Abdalla, Sudan)

89. In spite of the war that was ravaging the country, the Sudan had proclaimed 1990 as the Year of the Child and had stepped up its immunization operations. In addition, great efforts have been made in the context of "Operation Lifeline Sudan" to bring supplies and medicines to populations trapped in combat zones. The situation for mothers and children remained none the less extremely difficult. The state of war had in fact given rise to numerous economic and social problems, including the exodus towards the north of the country of populations fleeing the combat zones. War efforts were being carried out at the expense of basic services, and the situation was made worse by the great numbers of refugees of whom there were nearly 1 million.

90. Recalling the tragic situation of children in southern Africa and in the Arab territories occupied by Israel, she emphasized the importance of focusing the activities carried out by UNICEF in the context of its medium-term plan on maternal and child health, the organization of basic education programmes for mothers and the provision of drinking water. In addition, the Bamako Initiative should be extended to all African countries.

91. UNICEF had to co-operate with drug control agencies and with WHO in the fight against AIDS. With reference to the Sudan in particular, UNICEF should work jointly with WHO to eradicate endemic illnesses, such as schistosomiasis and malaria, which were currently rampant in the Sudan.

92. Mr. MARKS (Australia) said that, overall, substantial progress had been made in the 1980s. For example, the under-five child mortality rate had been reduced by 2 per cent each year in developing countries. However, it was still nine times higher than the corresponding rate in the industrialized countries.

93. Primary health care and basic education, followed by nutrition, water supply and sanitation were at the core of UNICEF's mandate, and they should continue to be given priority.

94. Despite a threefold increase in its resources, UNICEF was unable to meet every need. Consequently, it should, on the one hand, co-ordinate its programme activities at the country level with Governments, non-governmental organizations and bilateral agencies and, on the other hand, focus on pilot projects, which could be replicated by others, all the while learning from both successes and failures. Australia would like to see UNICEF continue its country planning process, which enabled field priorities to be taken into account.

95. Australia believed that, during the 1990s, health care should continue to receive at least 40 per cent of UNICEF programme resources. As the objectives of the Expanded Programme of Immunization were achieved, the newly available resources could be allocated to tackling the full range of the causes of child deaths, including those that were not preventable by vaccination, such as malaria and pneumonia. More resources also needed to be allocated to correcting vitamin A, iron and iodine deficiencies, combating AIDS and developing family planning.

(Mr. Marks, Australia)

96. His delegation had some misgivings concerning the proposed increase in expenditure on education from 7 per cent in 1989 to 25 per cent by the year 2000, since education required careful planning and co-ordination with local agencies and with donors; the focus should be on basic and non-formal education, with a special added focus on health and nutrition. The target group should be mothers and girls.

97. His delegation was very pleased that, for the first time, the Executive Board had before it a document on acute respiratory infections (ARI). His delegation endorsed the content of the document, which emphasized both the importance of the problem in developing countries, where respiratory infections accounted for 25 to 72 per cent of infant deaths, depending on the country, and the need to evaluate at the end of 1991 existing ARI programmes in Bolivia, Gambia and Thailand so as to guide UNICEF support for ARI programmes elsewhere. For its part, Australia intended to submit to the Executive Board a proposal concerning the approach to acute respiratory infections. The appointment of a senior adviser on that issue at UNICEF headquarters might also be timely.

98. His delegation had read with interest the document on safe motherhood. It would like to see an intensification of efforts to reverse the disturbing decline in breastfeeding in developing countries and of efforts to encourage child spacing, which improved survival chances of mothers and children. It requested UNICEF to consider the merits of establishing a joint committee with UNFPA for better co-ordination of population activities, along the lines of similar joint committees with WHO and with UNESCO.

99. Concerning aid to eastern Europe, while accepting some minor deflection of UNICEF human and intellectual resources to that area from time to time, Australia did not endorse the proposed allocation of $1 million to that area, since there was no clear indication of how the money would be spent.

100. His delegation supported the Chairman's proposals concerning decision-making procedures. It also supported the United Kingdom proposal that the Board consider whether a general debate - or at least a general debate in its present form - was really necessary, since the Board's decision-making capability was continually hampered by time constraints and since much of what was said during the general debate was said again in the committees.

101. In the interests of rotating Executive Board representation within its regional group, Australia would not be seeking a renewal of its mandate. As an observer, it would follow the work with interest, while awaiting a suitable opportunity to return to the Board.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1990 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 17 April 1990, at 6 p.m.

Chairman:	Miss DIEGUEZ	(Mexico)
later:	Mr. TREPCZYNSKI (Vice-Chairman)	(Poland)

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General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Mrs. M. A. Rebadavia, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 6.45 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. ARROSPIDE (Peru) said that the developing countries had had to face a severe economic crisis, which had lowered their living standards and given rise to tension and violence. That crisis had affected the weakest and most vulnerable sectors of society, primarily children, whose possibilities of an acceptable life were becoming increasingly limited. In that connection, the recently adopted Convention on the Rights of the Child should guide Governments in their policies concerning children. Peru had been one of the first countries to sign the Convention and was in the process of ratifying it.

2. The World Summit for Children was of paramount importance in order to draw up programmes to protect children and improve the living conditions of mothers and children on the basis of responsible collective action by all Governments. Children and young people were particularly exposed to the scourge of drug addiction. The countries affected by that problem must take decisive measures to eliminate drug consumption and rehabilitate children addicted to drugs. Developing countries had to take preventive measures to eliminate drug addiction and improve the living standards of the population groups concerned. UNICEF could play an important co-ordinating role in that regard and various non-governmental organizations could also take part in that effort.

3. The serious economic problems in Latin America had increased structural weaknesses, particularly with regard to the provision of maternal and child care. UNICEF had made an important contribution by setting up the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC), which had enabled the Governments of the region to lessen the impact of the economic crisis on children. Accordingly, his country felt that the annual allocation to SAFLAC must be increased and the Facility's period of operation extended.

4. The situation in Peru must be viewed within the overall context of the serious crisis affecting Latin America. The quality of maternal and child care had declined to levels characteristic of previous decades. That situation was further aggravated by the violent acts carried out by terrorist groups, which exploited and sacrificed children for their own ends. His Government was committed to improving the welfare of children in Peru. Resources made available by a more ethical treatment of the external debt problem would be used to help and protect children. Lastly, he reaffirmed his country's support for the work of UNICEF on behalf of children in the developing countries.

5. Mr. VIGIL (Nicaragua) said that despite the improved international climate, the efforts to improve the living conditions of children had not been sufficient. The adverse economic situation affecting the countries of Latin America had led to an extreme deterioration of living standards in the region, where 165 million persons were living in conditions of poverty, hunger and underdevelopment. That had caused profound social upheaval and threatened stability and democracy in the region.

(Mr. Vigil, Nicaragua)

6. In Central America, that negative situation had been aggravated by foreign intervention and had culminated in an unprecedented crisis. The effect of war on children had been devastating. Through its development programmes and the mobilization of resources, UNICEF could strengthen the peace process in Central America, particularly with regard to the treatment of children affected by the violence.

7. Almost 200,000 children had been directly affected by the armed conflict in Nicaragua. The economic cost had been enormous. Nevertheless, his Government had remained committed to a policy to improve the living standards of the Nicaraguan people. Enrolment in pre-school and primary education had been significantly expanded since 1978. In recent years, there had been a broad-based social movement to protect the rights of the child and promote programmes in that field. The basic objective was to reduce child mortality and help children develop their potential to the maximum extent through community participation, preventive measures, intersectoral co-ordination, social education and mobilization, and enhanced delivery of services.

8. Nicaragua supported the development goals and strategies for children set forth in document E/ICEF/1990/L.5 and agreed that UNICEF should focus its activities in the 1990s on human development and meeting basic needs.

9. His country had already signed and was in the process of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which would be the best international legal instrument for ensuring the protection and development of children. The upcoming World Summit for Children would be an excellent opportunity for heads of State and Government to exchange ideas and set priorities for solving the major problems affecting children throughout the world.

10. The report on SAFLAC (E/ICEF/1990/L.2) contained many useful recommendations which should be implemented in future UNICEF activities in that field. At the current session, the Executive Board should engage in an in-depth discussion of the question, taking into account the situation in the region and the comprehensive information provided in the report. The effective implementation of many UNICEF programmes in Latin America would depend on the efficient use of available resources, the setting of priorities for activities and the allocation of funds in accordance with the basic needs of the most vulnerable sectors.

11. The joint efforts by UNICEF and UNESCO in the field of education should continue. UNICEF should assist countries in defining policies to deal with the impact of environmental problems on children and provide special support for developing educational activities to improve children's living conditions. There was an urgent need to strengthen the technical capacity of countries and develop human resources at the national level in order to ensure adequate and sustained programme management. Support for education programmes was essential in that regard.

(Mr. Vigil, Nicaragua)

12. The recent elections in Nicaragua had been an important step in consolidating the democratic process that had begun with the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. His delegation hoped that the counter-revolutionary forces would be demobilized before the transfer of power to the new Government on 25 April 1990. That would usher in a new era of peace and development for the benefit of the entire Nicaraguan population, particularly children and other vulnerable groups.

13. Mr. MENDEZ (Philippines) said that, because they could be prevented, premature death, disability and lack of opportunity for the development and protection of children were unconscionable in the modern world. He therefore endorsed the goals and strategies for children and development in the 1990s as contained in document E/ICEF/1990/L.5. Those goals and strategies should also form part of the broader strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade, and the international community must mobilize the financial resources and political support necessary to achieve them.

14. Major goals, such as the improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, should be expressed in terms of quantifiable targets. Efforts must be made to reach larger segments of target populations, and greater stress should be placed on particularly disadvantaged groups and areas. All countries must, as his own had done, pursue adjustment and development with a human face to benefit the poorest segments of the population. His country's debt service burden hindered its child development efforts. He therefore urged early agreement and specific action on proposals for debt relief for child survival and development, and encouraged debtor countries to increase their official development assistance. It was also to be hoped that current reductions in military expenditures would release greater resources for humanitarian purposes.

15. UNICEF-assisted programmes must be sustained well beyond their termination because only then could UNICEF make a meaningful difference in the survival and development of children everywhere. He strongly emphasized the importance of promoting active community participation from the earlier stages of programme development, the upgrading of national capacities for programme development and management, and effective and broad-based advocacy and social mobilization efforts, with greater concentration on community-based social mobilization.

16. He fully supported the proposal to effect a gradual but substantial increase in the proportion of UNICEF resources devoted to basic education, and commended UNICEF's contribution to the formulation of the World Declaration on Education for All. His delegation attached such importance to education for all that it wished to propose the establishment of a global task force to monitor compliance by individual countries with the Declaration's call for them to develop and promote a policy environment conducive to the attainment of the Declaration's goals.

17. The issue of children under especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) was a growing cause for concern, and he proposed that a higher proportion of resources should be allocated to CEDC programmes. He also urged approval of his country's proposal for the expansion of the ongoing project on children in situations of

(Mr. Mendez, Philippines)

armed conflict. In connection with efforts to promote procurement from both developing countries and under-utilized major donors, UNICEF should expedite the expansion of local procurement in order to help boost the economy of the country being assisted, with due regard, of course, to quality control and the relevant guidelines for suppliers. His country continued to support the vital external relations function of UNICEF and therefore endorsed the recommendations in document E/ICEF/1990/L.4. A programme of action on advocacy and social mobilization had become an integral component of the Philippines' country programme for children, and its legislators had strongly supported the early ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which he had signed on his country's behalf.

18. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the decision to hold a World Summit for Children in September 1990 and was convinced that it would not only promote goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection and development of children but would also address those issues most critical for children in the decades ahead.

19. Mr. AL-KHUSSAIBY (Oman) said that in promoting the welfare of children consideration must be given to each country's individual needs and resource availability. He was pleased that in 1990 UNICEF was turning its attention to the girl child, as well as to quality of life as opposed to the mere reduction of deaths. He noted in that connection that tobacco manufacturers were focusing increasingly on third world countries, where tobacco would become a major killer in 20 to 30 years, and said that acute respiratory infections (ARI) programmes should therefore concentrate on the tobacco menace, which affected the respiratory system.

20. He supported the World Summit for Children, which he hoped would discuss the goals for the 1990s. Among those goals, the reduction of malnutrition by 50 per cent should be given high priority, because malnutrition had become a major obstacle to the survival and development of children and to improving the quality of their lives. Malnutrition led to disease, interfered with brain growth and was a major problem in all developing countries. Equal priority should be given to improved hygiene and sanitation, an area in which self-help was feasible with proper guidance. Nutrition and sanitation deserved the same high priority that had proved so successful in the areas of immunization and oral rehydration therapy (ORT). Primary education was also an important goal, but efforts to improve primary school enrolment should be supplemented by efforts to give children a better understanding of their future as productive citizens through greater appreciation of job and income opportunities.

21. The eradication of poliomyelitis was an important problem for many countries, and the measures taken to achieve it in one country would probably not succeed without comparable measures in neighbouring countries. There too, the importance of sanitation must be stressed, since poor sanitation also helped to transmit poliomyelitis. In connection with hepatitis, he said that the use of the hepatitis-B vaccine should be encouraged so that increased production would reduce its price.

(Mr. Al-Khussaiby, Oman)

22. The reduction of infant mortality to 50 per thousand live births by the year 2000 might be achievable for a country with a very high infant mortality rate, but it was equally important for countries with a rate below 50 per thousand to reduce that rate even further. In approaching the problem, it must be understood that the main causes of death in countries with low infant mortality rates were low birth weight and congenital malformation, and that they could not easily be diminished in a short period of time.

23. His own country was using ministries and community organizations to disseminate information on health and quality of life in order to sustain past achievements and implement new programmes that depended on behavioural changes in large groups of people.

24. Ms. VERLEZZA (Observer for Venezuela) said that her delegation fully supported the seven major goals set forth in the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1993 (E/ICEF/1990/3) and attached particular importance to reduction of the infant mortality rate and increasing access to education. Nevertheless, UNICEF programmes should focus greater attention on such questions as promoting the interests of children and social mobilization, children and the environment, and ways to reach marginalized groups.

25. Venezuela supported the objectives set forth in the medium-term plan with regard to the Latin American and Caribbean region. Her Government was concerned, however, at the particular situation of a number of countries in the region which belonged to the category of higher-income developing countries. That classification did not fully reflect the lower gross national product and per capita income and high foreign debt of a growing number of the countries so classified. Available programme resources for those countries were very limited. In that connection, she stressed the need to revise the current development indicators in order to reflect the socio-economic realities in the countries concerned.

26. Venezuela endorsed the concept of human development as a basic element of development planning for the 1990s. SAFLAC had proved to be an effective instrument for ensuring access to UNICEF resources. Her Government fully supported the Facility and felt that it should remain in operation for at least three years after 1991. In that connection, she expressed satisfaction at the activities carried out by the Facility through the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in mobilizing social groups in the countries concerned and protecting the most vulnerable ones, such as women and children.

27. Venezuela fully supported the development goals and strategies for children: priorities for UNICEF action in the 1990s (E/ICEF/1990/L.5). In spite of its heavy debt burden and the negative effects of the adjustment programme on national social development programmes, Venezuela was making a considerable effort to minimize the effect of the economic crisis on its child population. UNICEF had made it possible to strengthen co-operation in that field and enabled her country to improve its national capacity. The upcoming World Summit for Children would be the appropriate

(Ms. Verlezza, Observer, Venezuela)

forum for analysing the impact on children of such contemporary problems as violence, armed conflict, foreign debt, critical poverty, environmental degradation, drugs and limited access to education. Drawing up and implementing programmes for the protection and development of children required a concerted national and international effort and a strong political commitment at the highest level.

28. Lastly, she said that her country had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and hoped to ratify it in the very near future. The speedy entry into force of the Convention would guarantee children their basic rights and ensure the necessary protection in that regard.

29. Mrs. KABA DIENEBOU (Observer for Côte d'Ivoire) noted that as the twenty-first century drew near, the social situation of children in many third world countries was far from reassuring. To a large extent, the remarkable progress achieved in such areas as preventive medicine or maternal and child protection and education had been threatened by the unprecedented economic crisis of recent years. That was particularly true in the sub-Saharan African countries, where the 1980s was viewed as a "lost decade" in terms of both economic development and social progress. On a continent heavily populated by young people, 50 per cent of African children lived in absolute poverty; the infant mortality rate was 137 per thousand; and the number of women who died from pregnancy-related complications was 20 times greater than it was in northern Europe. In 1950, Africa had accounted for only 15 per cent of deaths among infants and children in the world, but by 1980, the figure had risen to 28 per cent and it was currently 32 per cent. While a number of factors had contributed to that steady deterioration - also evident in school enrolment and other social indicators - the collapse in export revenues and the implementation of structural adjustment policies had clearly acted as a brake on social progress.

30. Faced with $9 billion losses in the past three years after coffee and cocoa prices plummeted, Côte d'Ivoire had been forced to cut its government expenditures. That had had devastating effects on health and education programmes. Such middle-income countries strapped by debt and impoverished by lower export earnings deserved greater attention from development organizations. Her delegation appreciated UNICEF's efforts to alert other international agencies to the fact that progress was measured just as much by improved living standards as by economic growth.

31. Nevertheless, activities to benefit children would have a lasting impact only if they were part of a global economic and social development strategy. A continent where 45 per cent of the population of working age was unemployed, where there were not enough schools to accommodate pupils, where medical centres were either non-existent or without supplies, and where the only children's playground was the street was hardly conducive to social progress. In that context, the very first tasks would be to identify, and then eliminate, the obstacles to implementing the rights of the child in Africa. That would require greater co-ordination of activities and the active collaboration of all development agencies. It was to be hoped that the World Summit for Children in September 1990 would elaborate an effective global strategy for the promotion and protection of children.

32. Mr. TERRY (Observer for Cuba) noted that Cuba, although a poor and developing country, had achieved considerable success in the health and education sectors. Poliomyelitis, diphtheria and tetanus among new-borns had been wiped out, malaria was non-existent and the incidence of tuberculosis was among the lowest in the western hemisphere. In 1989, Cuba had an infant mortality rate of 11.01 per thousand live births and an under-five mortality rate of 13.6. Mortality among mothers was 2.9 per 10,000 live births. In the past two decades, deaths caused by communicable diseases had decreased from 12 per cent to 1.2 per cent, and in the past five years, there had been no measles-related deaths. Indeed, an objective for 1990 was the eradication of measles, German measles and mumps. Magnificent results had been obtained from a vaccine against meningococcic meningitis type B developed by Cuban researchers, and plans for 1991 included immunization of the entire Cuban population against hepatitis B, also with a Cuban-developed vaccine. Only 434 out of 7,400,000 subjects (representing a national rate of 0.006 per cent) had tested positive for AIDS. In addition, the past five years had seen the implementation of an ambitious social plan which guaranteed an education to every child, whether healthy, disabled or disturbed.

33. None the less, his delegation was concerned for the fate of millions of children in other countries, particularly in the third world, where growing poverty as a result of external debt, the economic recession and adjustment policies had had a drastic impact on health and education. In that context, the World Summit for Children was a welcome initiative, as it would add a new dimension to the search for a solution to economic problems with social consequences. Cuba had already signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was in the process of ratifying it. Consistent with the ideology of its national hero, José Martí, Cuba had assisted some 30 countries in the areas of health and education - and had done so in spite of its own economic difficulties. It had also provided medical attention to hundreds of children after the Chernobyl disaster.

34. An active participant in regional initiatives for children, Cuba had recently hosted Cocoyoc II, whose theme was the reduction of infant mortality in Latin America. His delegation welcomed the increase in the resources of SAFLAC. In conclusion, the Executive Board, and particularly the Executive Director, were to be commended on the quality of the documents prepared for the current session.

35. Mr. RADULIAN (Observer for Romania) expressed gratitude to the Executive Director and to UNICEF for the generous assistance provided to his country during the events of December 1989. Medical equipment, food, clothing and health experts dispatched by UNICEF had helped Romania to lift itself out of the state of famine and poverty to which it had declined under the former régime. Romanian children, particularly handicapped and AIDS-infected children, had benefited from the work of UNICEF's expert team, which had presented its findings to the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education. The numbers of handicapped or unwanted children in Romania had been swelled by the former régime's pro-birth policy, and as a result many children had been institutionalized. Poor sanitary conditions in many of those institutions had pushed up the infant mortality rate considerably.

(Mr. Radulian, Observer, Romania)

36. Recognizing the needs of its own children and of children in all parts of the world, Romania had been one of the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the immediate term the Government, with UNICEF's support, was attempting to develop a healthier, more balanced diet for Romanian children, reassess the national immunization programme and rebuild medical centres. Romania also needed to retrain its teachers, who had not received specialized training since the closing of teacher-training and social welfare institutes five years earlier. The country also lacked scientific and technical information and expertise as a result of its many years of isolation. Romania's newly formed National Committee for UNICEF as yet had very few contacts with other humanitarian organizations, which meant that it lacked experience and material support. However, the National Committee was broad-based, and included representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Education, and from non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross, the church and environmental and women's groups. Its efforts to give new definition to the central role of the child in society and ascribe priority to child welfare had recently been hailed by Romanian public opinion. In conclusion, he said that his delegation intended to participate fully in the World Summit for Children, which it viewed as a highly significant step.

37. Mr. Trepczynski (Poland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

38. Mr. MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) said that the Holy See had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and would soon deposit the instruments of accession with the Secretary-General. The rights of children derived not from the action of Governments or individuals, but only from their essential human nature, regardless of the stage of development of their existence or the convenience or inconvenience caused by their presence. To violate any of their rights, the foremost of which was the right to life itself, was a crime of a most hideous nature. The Convention represented a minimalist position designed to achieve consensus, and did not go far enough. The Holy See therefore accepted it only with reservations. The rights of children must be safeguarded before, as well as after, birth; in its reservations, the Holy See had upheld the primary and inalienable rights of parents, especially with respect to eduction, religion, association with others and privacy, and it interpreted the phrase "family planning" in article 24.2 to mean only those methods that were considered morally acceptable.

39. The Holy See viewed with great alarm the proposals to involve UNICEF in the destruction of existing human life, even to the point of making it an advocate for abortion in countries whose legislation did not allow it. The Holy See firmly opposed such proposals not only on moral grounds but also because they would be a totally unacceptable departure from the stated purposes of UNICEF. Such proposals also constituted a dangerous form of neo-colonialism, with the powerful trying to impose on the less powerful the adoption of practices contrary to the cultural, social, moral and religious values that had formed their heritage and sustained them on the arduous path to independence and development. The interests of children would be promoted by the genuine development of those countries and the attendant realization of the educational and social rights that their right to life entailed.

(Mr. Martino, Observer, Holy See)

40. Lastly, he announced that the Holy See was making a symbolic contribution of $US 3,000 to the budget for the mobilization activities of the forthcoming World Summit for Children.

The meeting rose at 8.20 p.m.